GARDEN PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Late summer *STUNNERS*

4 fabulous gardens with sensational seasonal planting

A passion for pumpkins

Delicious and decorative options to grow

GOING TO POT

Fresh container ideas for autumn

JAPANESE ANEMONES

Top new types that won't take over

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Welcome

JOHN CAMPBELL

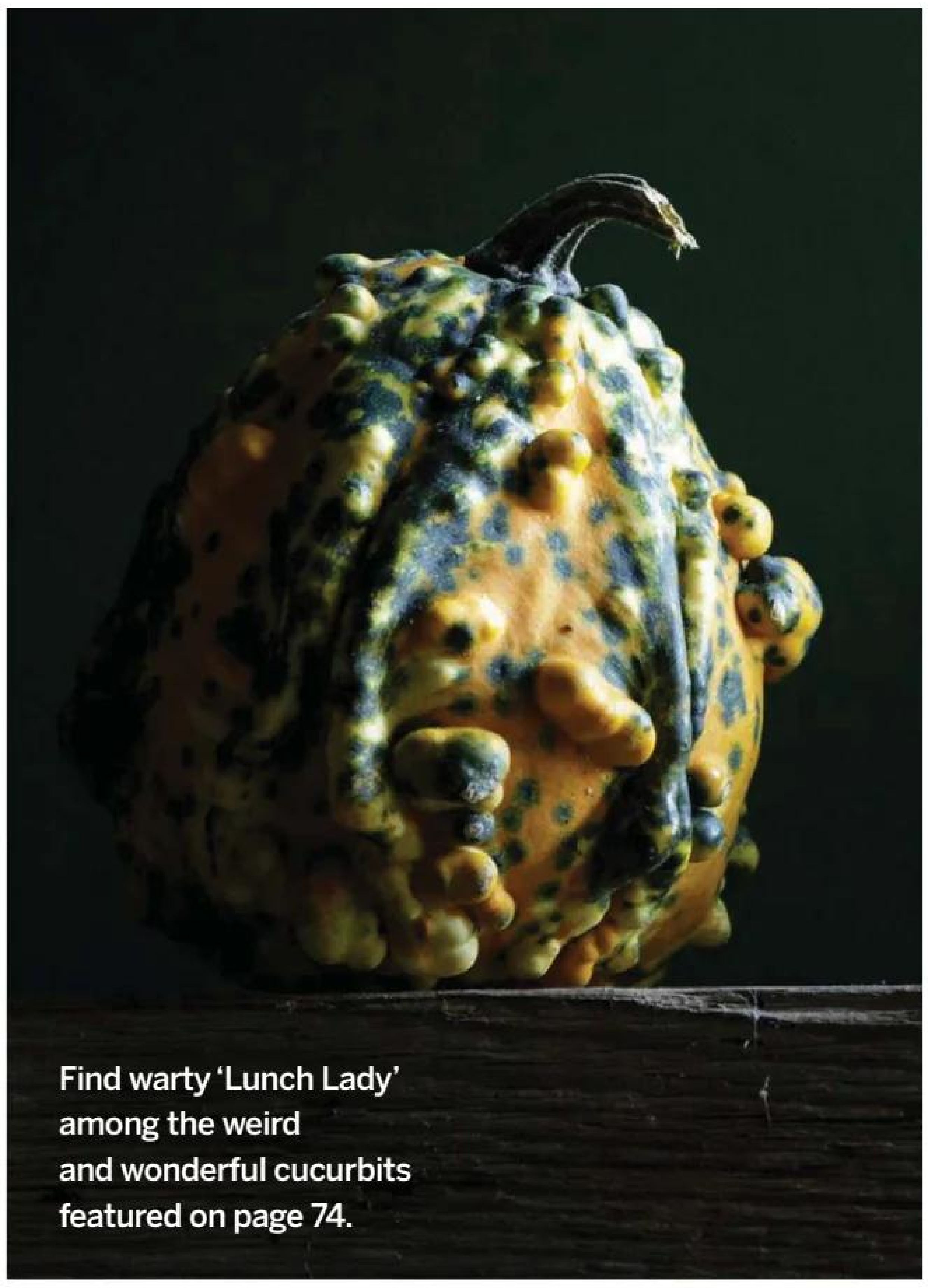
The season is changing again, and as we transition from late summer into autumn, that back-to-school feeling gives a renewed sense of possibility. One of the real stalwarts in the garden right now is the Japanese anemone, and you can discover the best new cultivars, and why we really shouldn't be calling them Japanese, in our plant profile (page 44). We dive into the world of pumpkins and ornamental gourds with an aficionado who shares his favourite varieties to grow to eat and for decoration (page 74), and Andrea Brunsendorf gives us her expert picks of plants for September (page 16), plus designer Jo Thompson has three more stylish container combinations for autumn (page 58).

Naturalistic planting with ornamental grasses and prairie-style plants comes into its own at this time of year, and we have a bevy of beautiful gardens in this style for you this issue. Hans Gieszen's dream was to create a perennial garden in the style of Piet Oudolf, and his passion and dedication have more than paid off (page 32). In Cambridgeshire, landscape architect Robert Myers drew inspiration from a historic house to create a garden that marries traditional and contemporary elements (page 52).

We return to Arvensis in Wiltshire to see how the nursery's display borders have been redeveloped with aplomb (page 64); and find out how things have changed at the garden and nursery of Marchants Hardy Plants in East Sussex, where a new team is continuing to innovate (page 82). The wonderful stories behind each of these spaces are sure to inspire you.

Stephanie Mahon

STEPHANIE MAHON, EDITOR



JOHN CAMPBELL

Find warty 'Lunch Lady' among the weird and wonderful cucurbits featured on page 74.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

Is gardening cool? Fashion houses certainly think so. Discover how fashion is having a moment with horticulture right now.
gardensillustrated.com/hort-couture

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SIETSKE DE VRIES

Filling his rural plot with a naturalistic mix of perennials and grasses was a dream come true for Dutch gardener Hans Gieszen, page 32.

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COVER IMAGE

Anemone x *hybrida* 'Robustissima'. Photograph by Jason Ingram (page 44)

ON THE COVER

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EVENTS AND OFFERS

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- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 26

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Design: Craig Atkinson

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“I appreciated the interaction with fellow designers and being able to share our experience. AG

Design: Craig Atkinson

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Phil Clayton
Phil meets the new team at Marchants Hardy Plants, page 82. *“It’s reassuring to find this long-renowned nursery continues to inspire and excite with a new team at the helm.”*

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Tim Richardson
Tim profiles Andy Jasper, page 72. *“I’ve always enjoyed meeting people who effect change, and Andy has emerged as one of the most powerful voices in British horticulture.”*

Clayton Boyd
Clayton photographs a small Neive Tierney designed garden in Los Angeles, page 92. *“A delightful shoot; Neive is lovely to work with and I’m so happy to see these photos in print.”*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993 and is now CEO of the garden’s Charitable Trust. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

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Sarah is one of the UK’s most sought-after garden designers. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012, 2018 and 2023, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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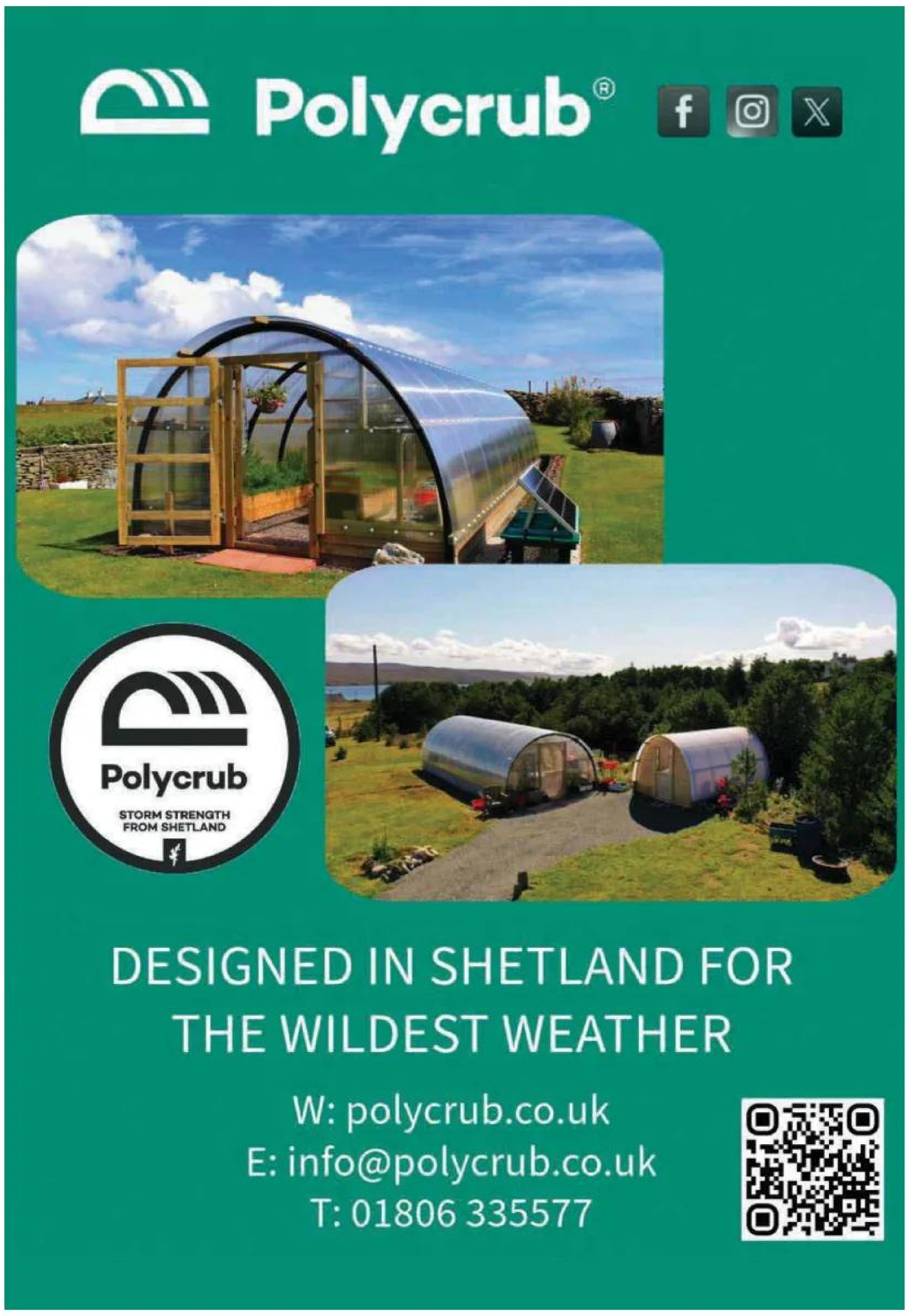
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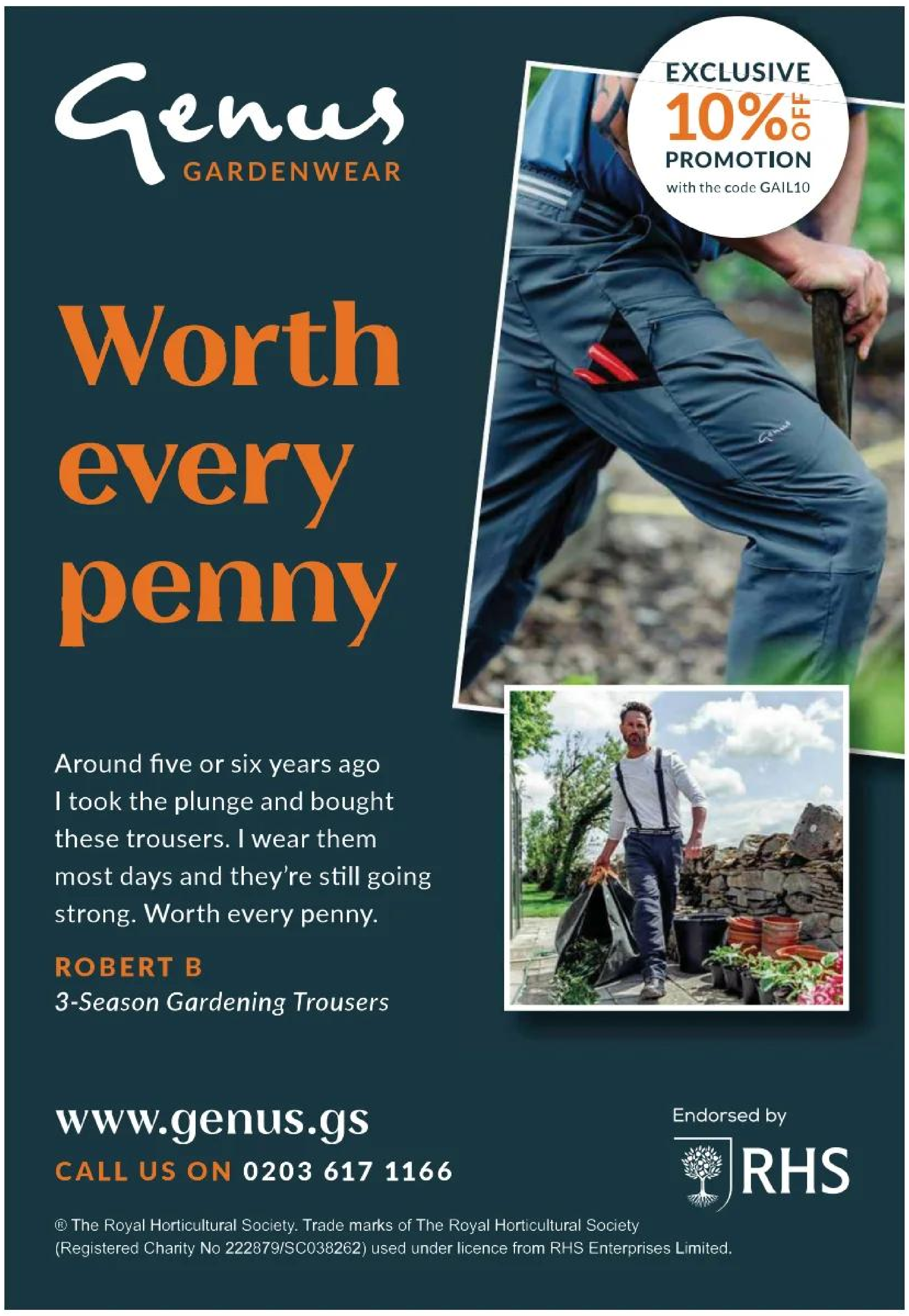
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DIG IN

What's new, what's growing and what's going on this month

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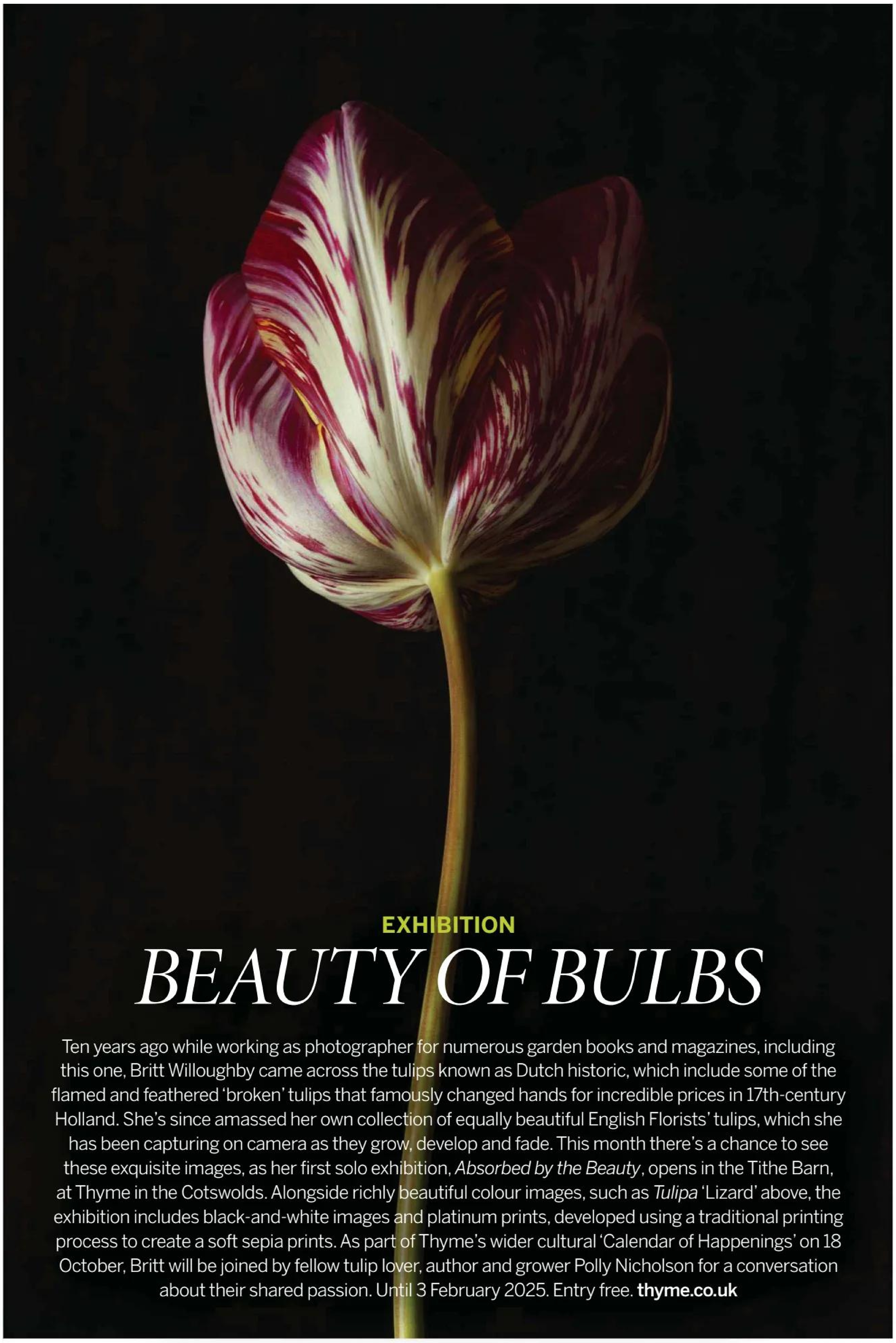


BRITT WILLOUGHBY

EXHIBITION

BEAUTY OF BULBS

Ten years ago while working as photographer for numerous garden books and magazines, including this one, Britt Willoughby came across the tulips known as Dutch historic, which include some of the flamed and feathered 'broken' tulips that famously changed hands for incredible prices in 17th-century Holland. She's since amassed her own collection of equally beautiful English Florists' tulips, which she has been capturing on camera as they grow, develop and fade. This month there's a chance to see these exquisite images, as her first solo exhibition, *Absorbed by the Beauty*, opens in the Tithe Barn, at Thyme in the Cotswolds. Alongside richly beautiful colour images, such as *Tulipa* 'Lizard' above, the exhibition includes black-and-white images and platinum prints, developed using a traditional printing process to create a soft sepia prints. As part of Thyme's wider cultural 'Calendar of Happenings' on 18 October, Britt will be joined by fellow tulip lover, author and grower Polly Nicholson for a conversation about their shared passion. Until 3 February 2025. Entry free. **thyme.co.uk**

ANDREA GILPIN

Talking point
DO YOU FAKE IT?

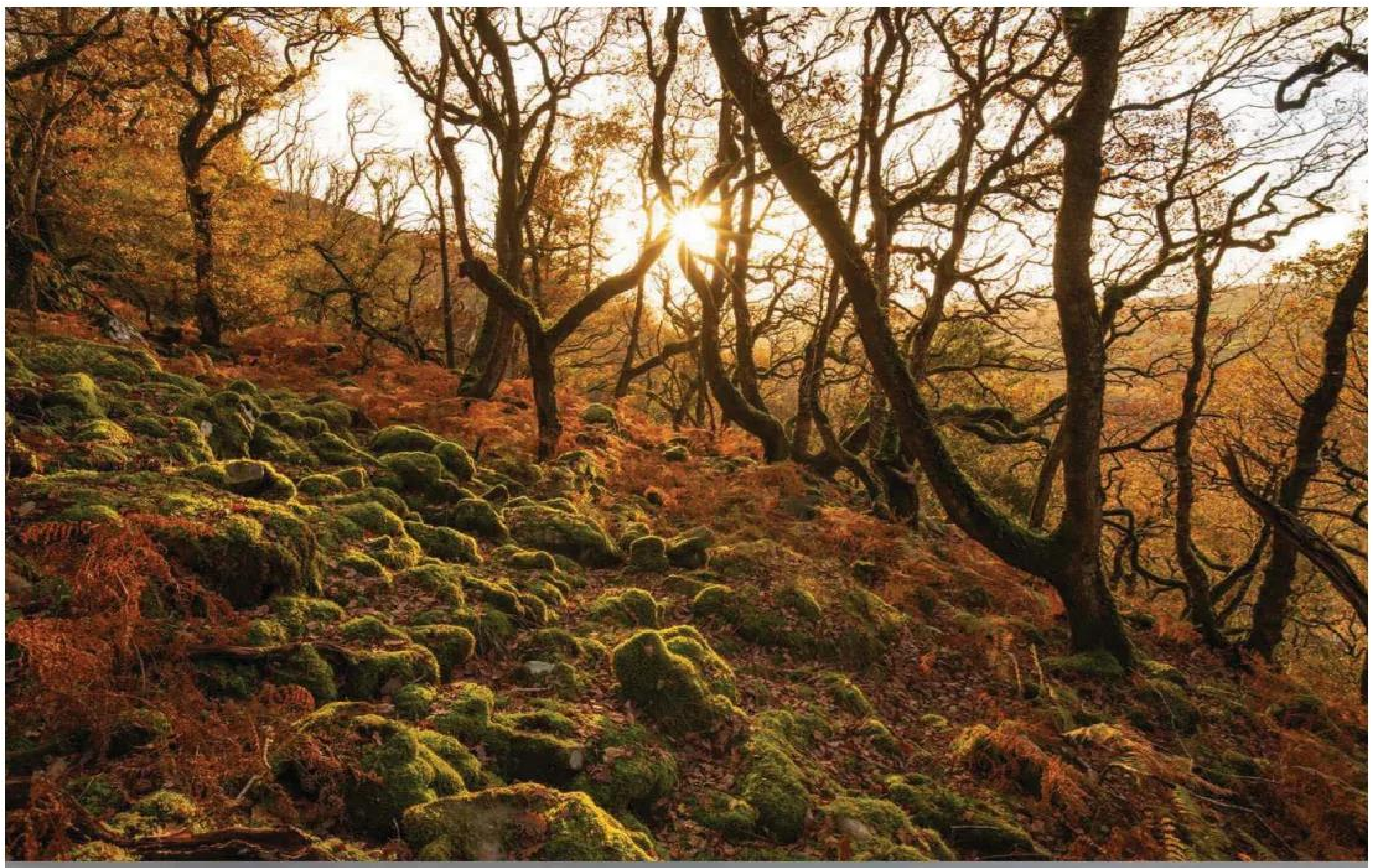
Fake flowers have become a decorative staple – in shop window displays, around restaurant doorways, strung up on café ceilings and decorating bathrooms. But why use fakes, when you could create a natural display full of life and fragrance?

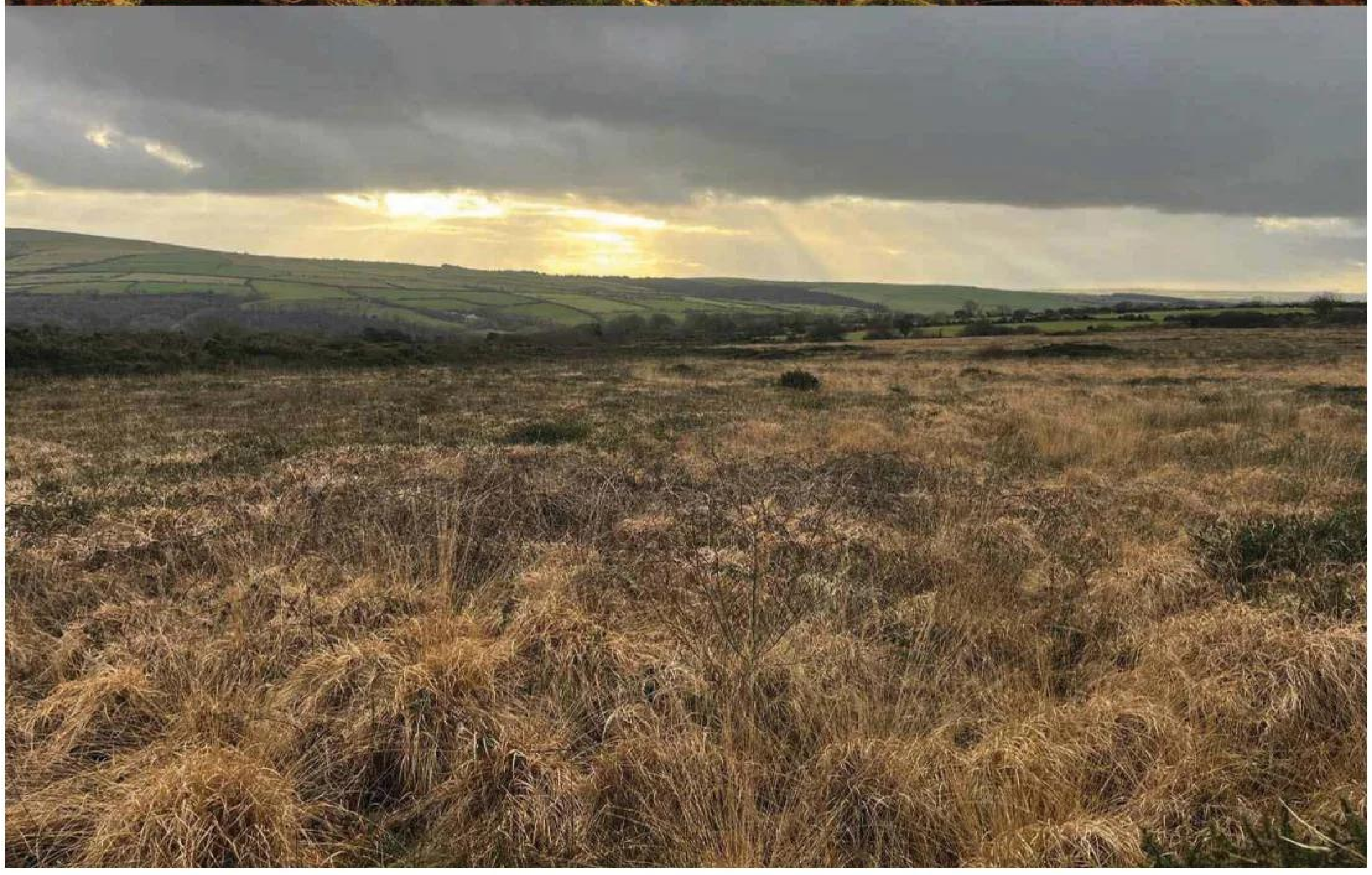
The answer is pretty simple – they last longer and the plastic ones used most often are cheaper. "Many businesses have gained significant attention on social media thanks to Instagrammable floral displays," says floral designer Hazel Gardiner (above). "Fresh floral installations typically last only five to seven days, whereas artificial stems offer longevity and require minimal maintenance, resulting in substantial cost savings."

But not all fakes are created equal. "As with most products, quality can vary greatly," she says. "Inexpensive options, often made from non-recyclable plastics, are usually poor imitations of the flowers they aim to replicate. In contrast, silk flowers or those made from recycled materials, offering a more life-like, sustainable option, are rightfully more expensive. Other alternatives include dried stems, paper flowers, and natural materials such as twisted willow or birch branches, which we use to great effect."

Hazel admits her own floral studio works with brands that sometimes require permanent floral displays, but her advice, when faux stems are the only option, is to source ethically and reuse, repeatedly. "Artificial blooms should never be treated as single-use plastics; save them for future projects or rehome them on an online marketplace, and consider buying pre-loved blooms," she says.

For tips on how to choose the most sustainable option for your space, scan the QR code or visit **gardensillustrated.com/fauxflowers**





BEN PORTER, SRAH KESSELL

CONSERVATION

Reforestation station

The Wildlife Trust of West and South Wales has announced plans to restore lost temperate rainforests in Pembrokeshire. The project at Trellwyn Fach (above) is part of the Wildlife Trusts' Atlantic Rainforest Recovery Programme, which aims to restore temperate rainforests to areas in the British Isles where they used to grow, including at Coed Crafnant in Gwynedd (shown top). Trellwyn Fach comprises 146 acres of mostly grassland, two-thirds of which will become broad-leaved woodland through planting and natural regeneration. **welshwildlife.org**

PLANTS

Colour combinations

Pod & Pip has launched a new range of spring bulbs ready for planting from this month. Available in three carefully curated colour schemes – the Peaches and Plum Tulip Collection, the Ivory Hints Tulip Collection and the Double Daffodil Collection – they come in recyclable brown paper bags with full planting instructions and a charming illustration by artist Hannah Watchorn. Prices start at £25 for 30 bulbs. **podandpip.co.uk**

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OUT & ABOUT

GARDEN GETAWAY

Trebah Gardens, the beautiful subtropical garden famed for its exotic blooms and Hydrangea Valley overlooking Cornwall's Helford River, has opened its newly refurbished gatehouse as a holiday let. Trebah Lodge offers high-end accommodation for up to four guests and has a small, private enclosed garden. Lodge guests also have unlimited access to Trebah Gardens during normal opening hours, but the real treat is the after-hours access to the garden's footpaths that lead to Polgwidden Cove, a private beach also owned by the Trebah Garden Trust. Trebah Lodge can be booked through Cornish Holiday Cottages. **trebahgarden.co.uk**

PLANTS

MIXING IT UP

Wildflower Turf has launched a new range of seed mixes to enhance biodiversity. Available in mixes for small-scale projects all the way up to quantities aimed at landscape developers, the Enhance Wildflower Biodiversity range features premium seeds and a scientifically developed growing medium to enhance wildflower and grassland spaces. Mixes include those developed specifically for bees and butterflies and can also be made bespoke. **wildflowerturf.co.uk**

What to do this month

BRITT WILLOUGHBY

13-29 SEPTEMBER

Gardens for Good Causes Exhibition Free exhibition highlighting Project Giving Back. 10am-5pm. The Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. gardenmuseum.org.uk

SARAH ANGEL

14-15 SEPTEMBER

Beautiful & Useful Browse stalls from designer-makers. 11am-5pm. Sussex Prairie Garden, Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, nr Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT. beautiful-useful.co.uk

22 SEPTEMBER

Yoga and Forest Bathing Enjoy a morning of wellness in the woodlands around Brighton. 10am-2pm. £35. One Garden Brighton, Stanmer Park, Lewes Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 9SE. onegarden brighton.com

JIAJI WU

SYMPOSIUM

EARTH DAYS

Soil is one of the plant's most sustainable materials, used in architecture and landscape design for millennia; it holds the power to sequester carbon and to insulate, and next month is the subject of a two-day symposium. Hosted by Tom Stuart-Smith Studio, Working with Earth will be held at the Serge Hill Project for Gardening, Creativity and Health and brings together some of the most innovative minds in sustainable architecture and landscape architecture working in the UK today, including Tom and Ben Stuart-Smith, Sarah Price, Cleve West, Tom Massey and Millie Souter. Tickets cost £200 per day, including a home-made vegetarian lunch and refreshments, and drinks, canapés and music on the opening evening. 3-4 October, 9.30am-4pm. **sergehillproject.co.uk**

SHOPPING

In the groove

Add a dash of Scandi style to your home with the curvaceous new vases and bowls from Bergs Potter's Belle Collection. Designed in Denmark, and hand-thrown by small potteries in Porto and Tuscany, the simple and elegant majolica clay vases are the perfect foil for fresh flowers and foliage. Both vases and the food-safe, glazed bowls come in two sizes, with prices starting at £119 for a small bowl and £179 for a small vase. **bergspottery.com**

BERGS POTTER

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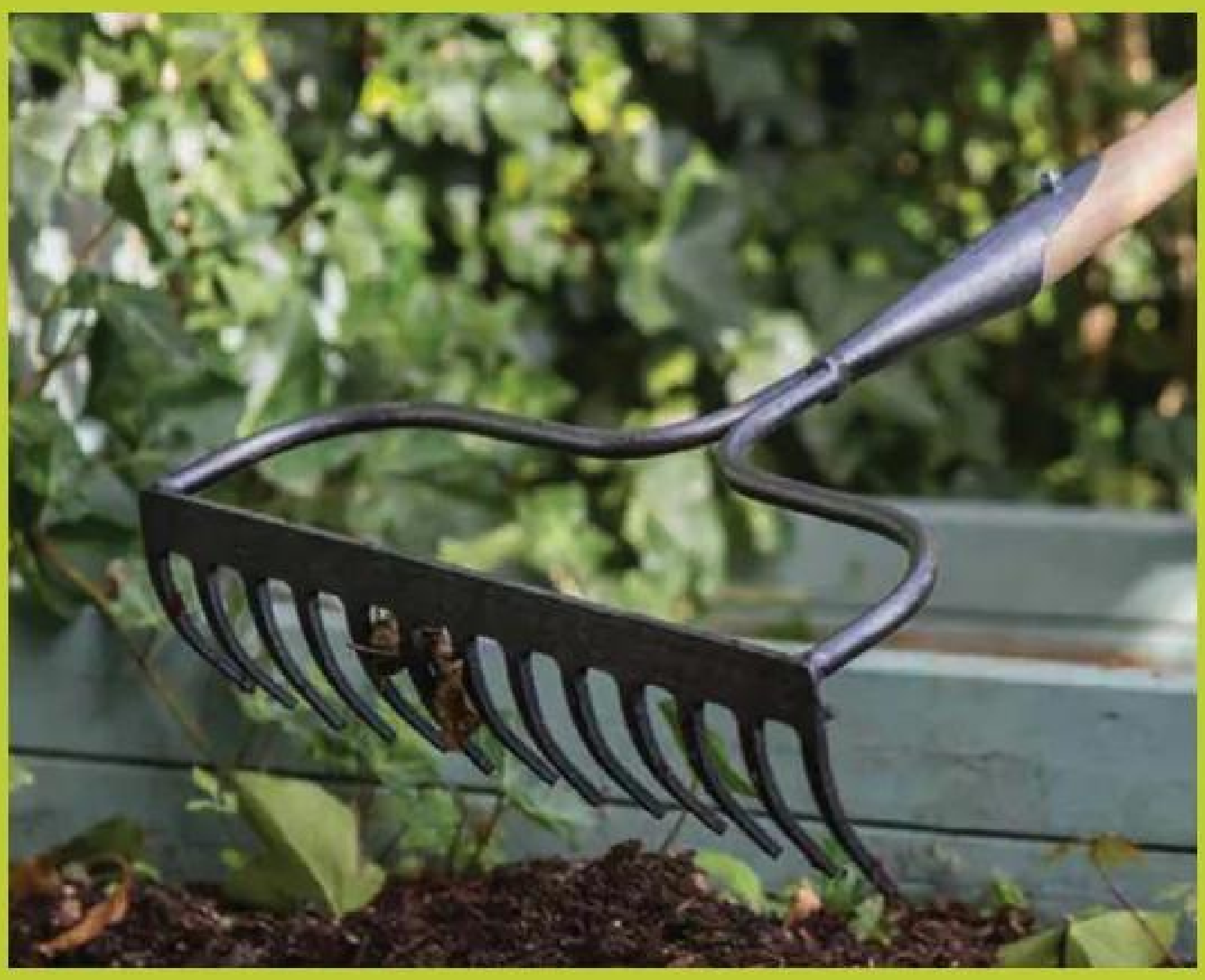
GARDEN RAKES



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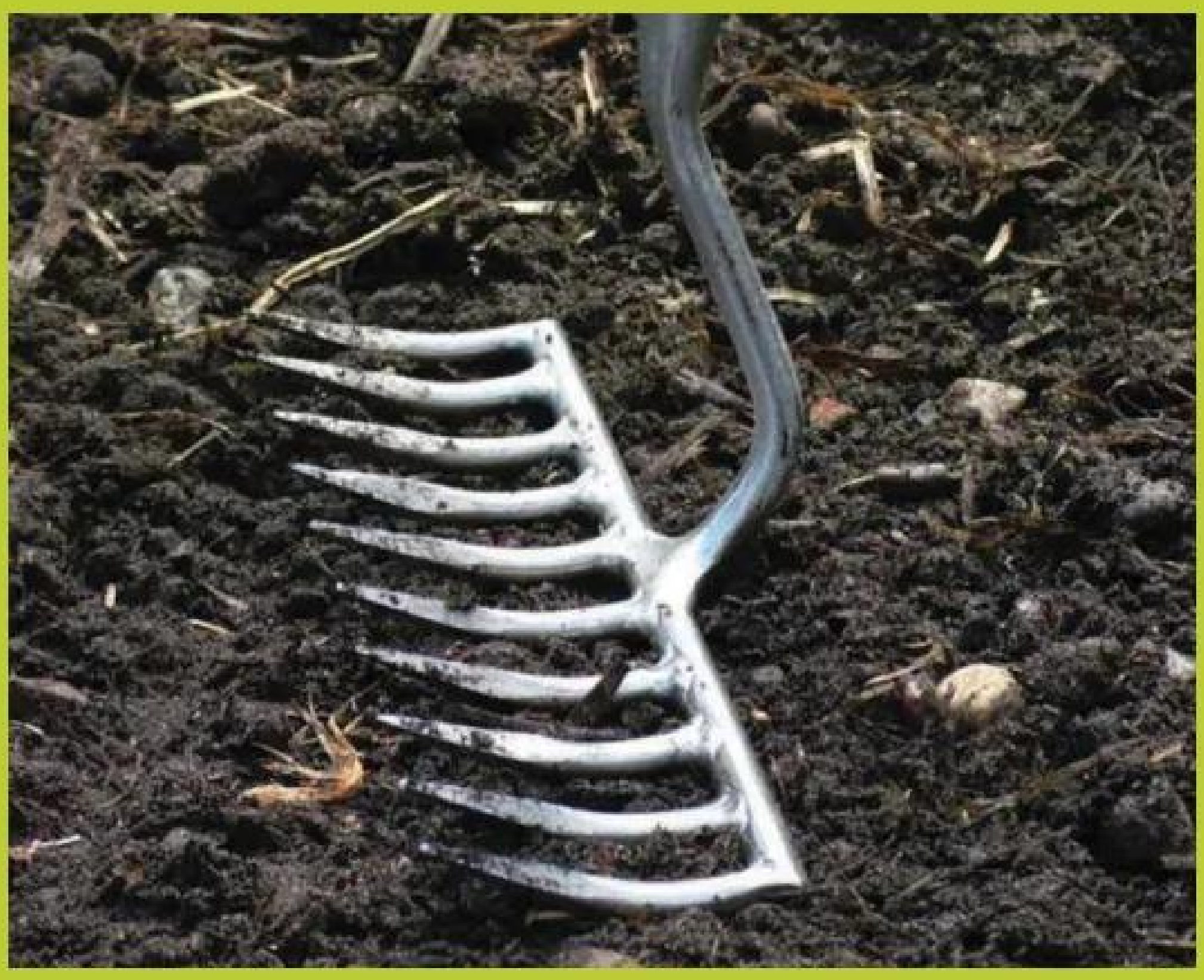

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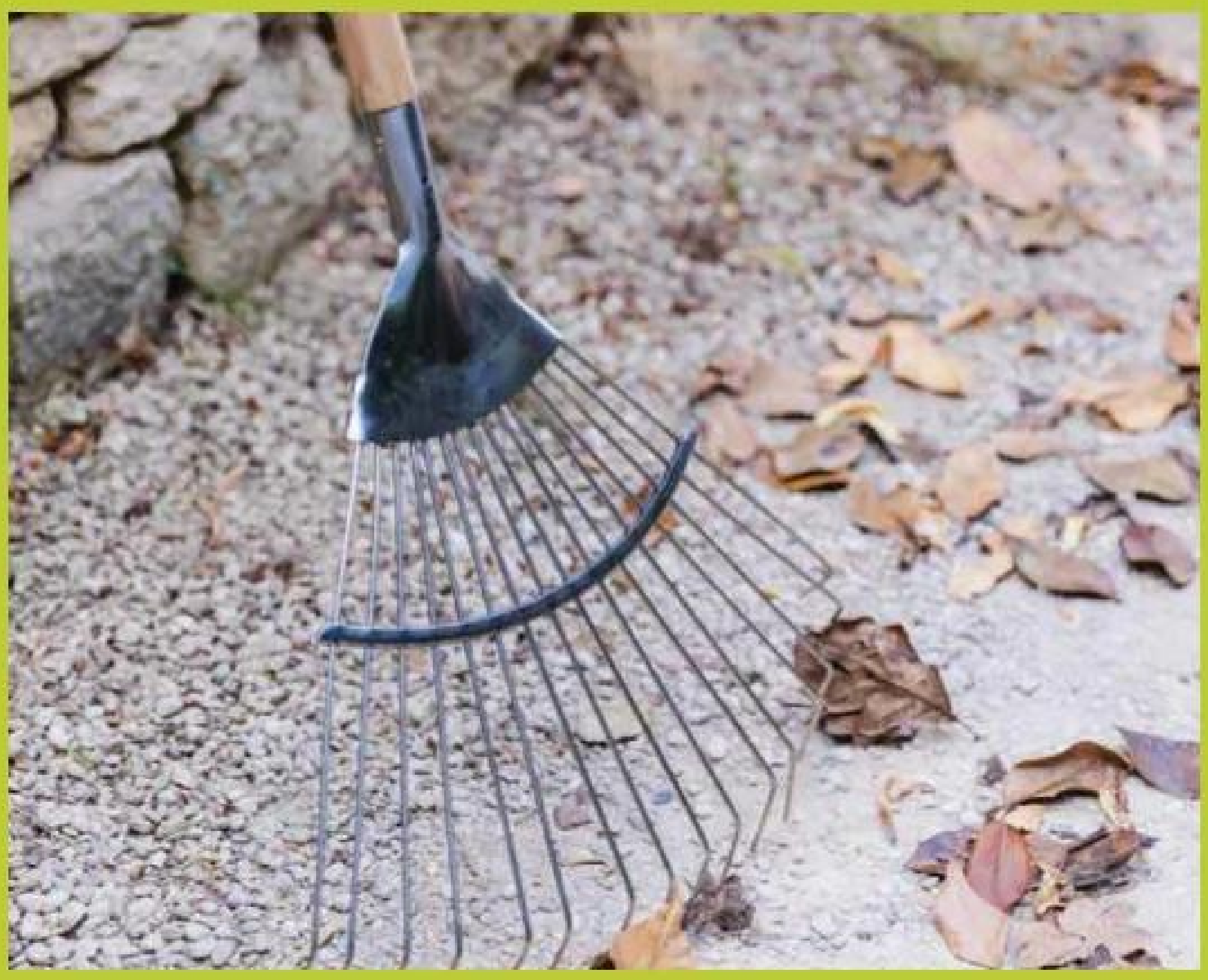

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TROPAEOLUM SPECIOSUM

This is a perennial nasturtium with attractive, small, clover-like foliage and a much finer demeanour than its annual cousins. This herbaceous climber retreats into its hardy tubers each winter, which are best situated in the shade of shrubs. It performs well in cooler summer regions, with shelter from the wind. It is often seen scrambling up yew hedges, where its bright-crimson flowers with long spurs make a compelling show, before producing shiny blue berries. It gently grows through other perennials, providing late-season interest. AGM*.

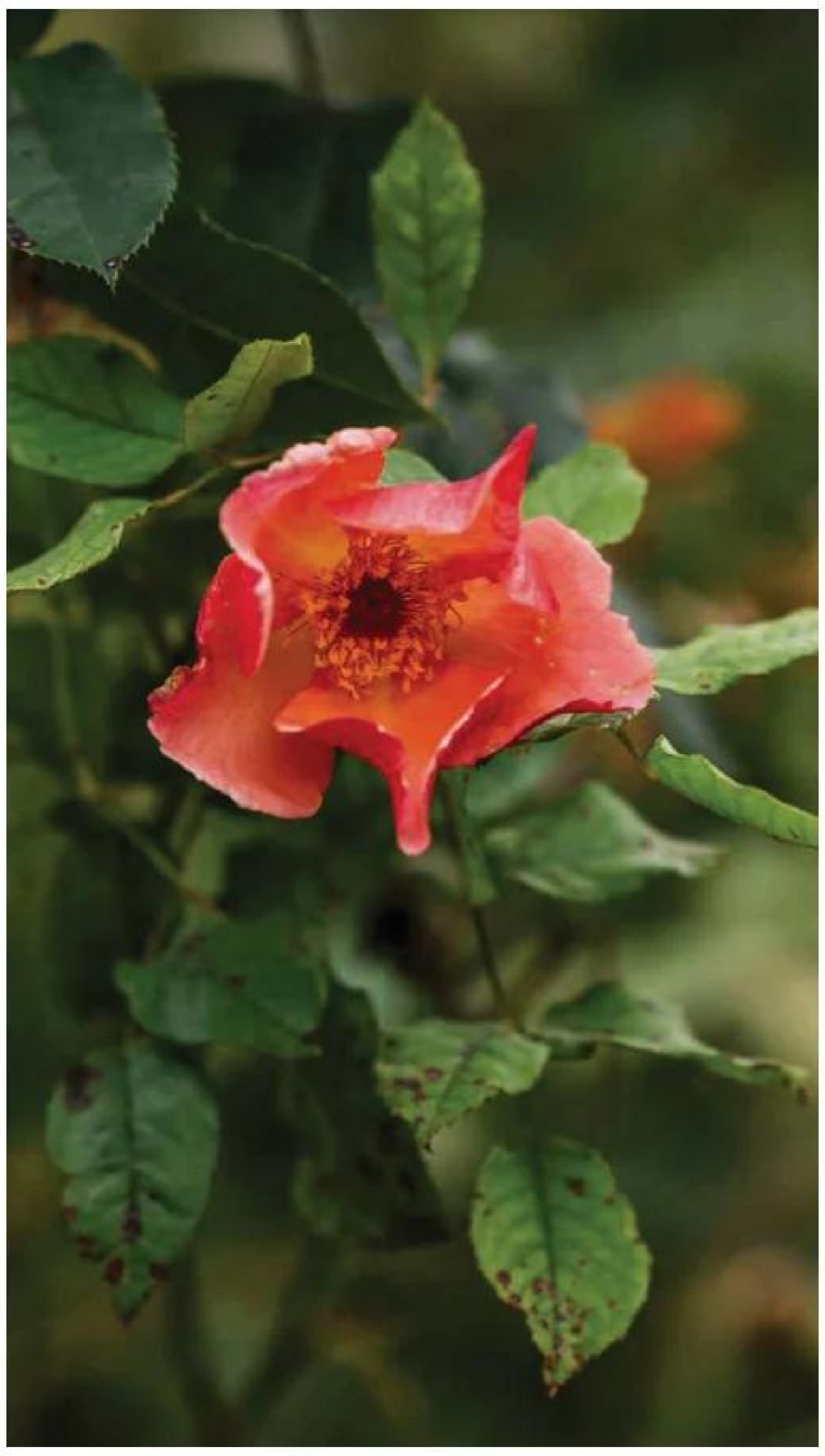
Height and spread 4m x 1m.
Origin Chile.
Conditions Moist, well-draining, humus-rich soils, preferably acidic; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b†.
Season of interest Flowers July – September; fruit throughout October.

Andrea Brunsendorf is head gardener at Lowther Castle & Gardens in Cumbria **lowthercastle.org**

September plants

As summer slowly eases into autumn, head gardener **Andrea Brunsendorf** chooses ten plants to keep the show going in the garden

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MAYBURY



ROSA MORNING MIST (= 'AUSFIRE')

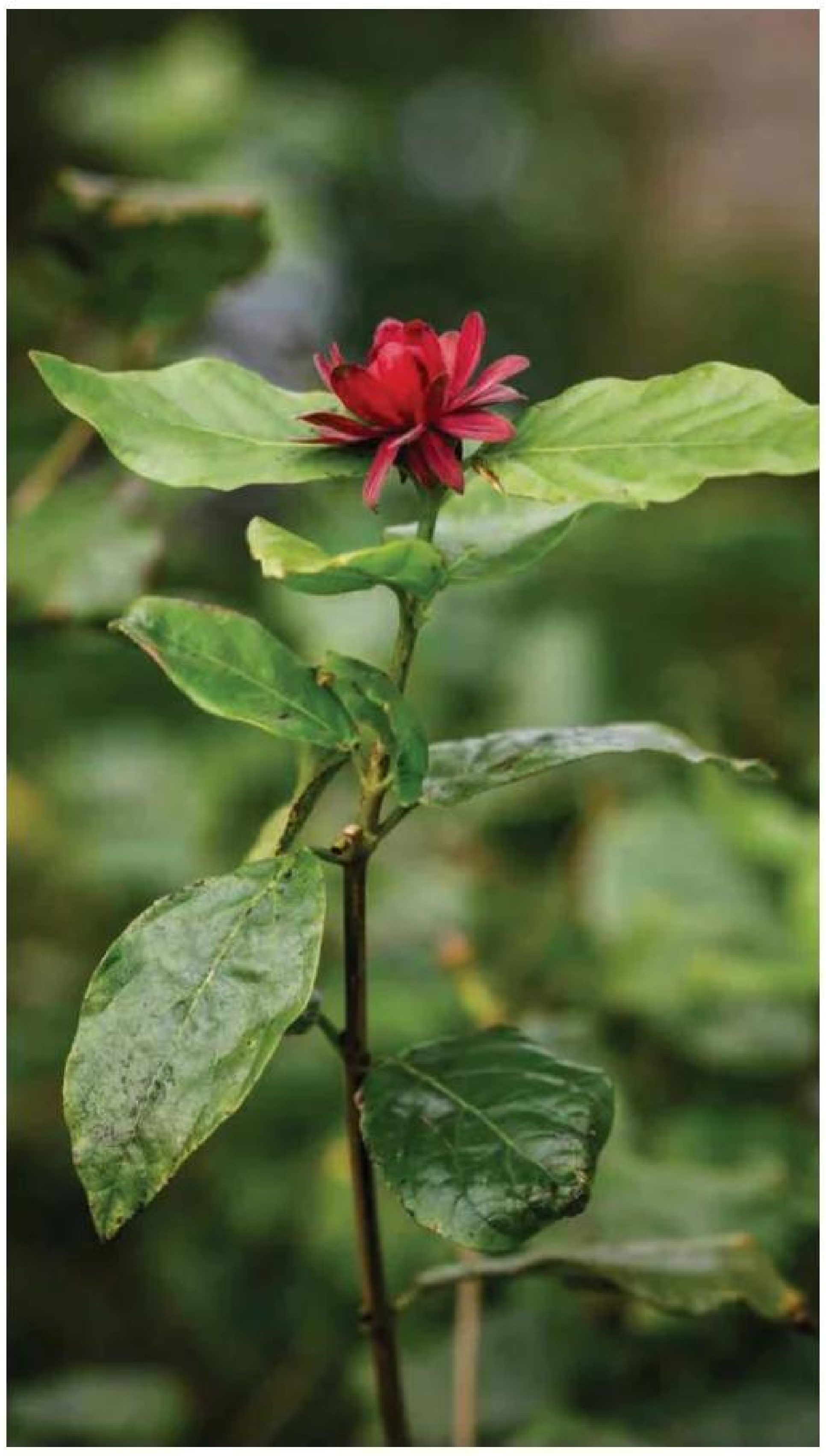
This repeat-flowerer is fully hardy and simply ethereal, with its single open flowers arranged in small clusters, ranging from coral pink to peach-flushed orange. The large, yellow boss of stamens attracts many pollinators. The lightly musk-scented flowers turn into brilliant orange hips, so don't deadhead this one. At Lowther, this mighty northern stalwart forms the central spine of many of our narrow rose beds and is flanked by numerous more petite semi-double beauties, creating an attractive contrast.

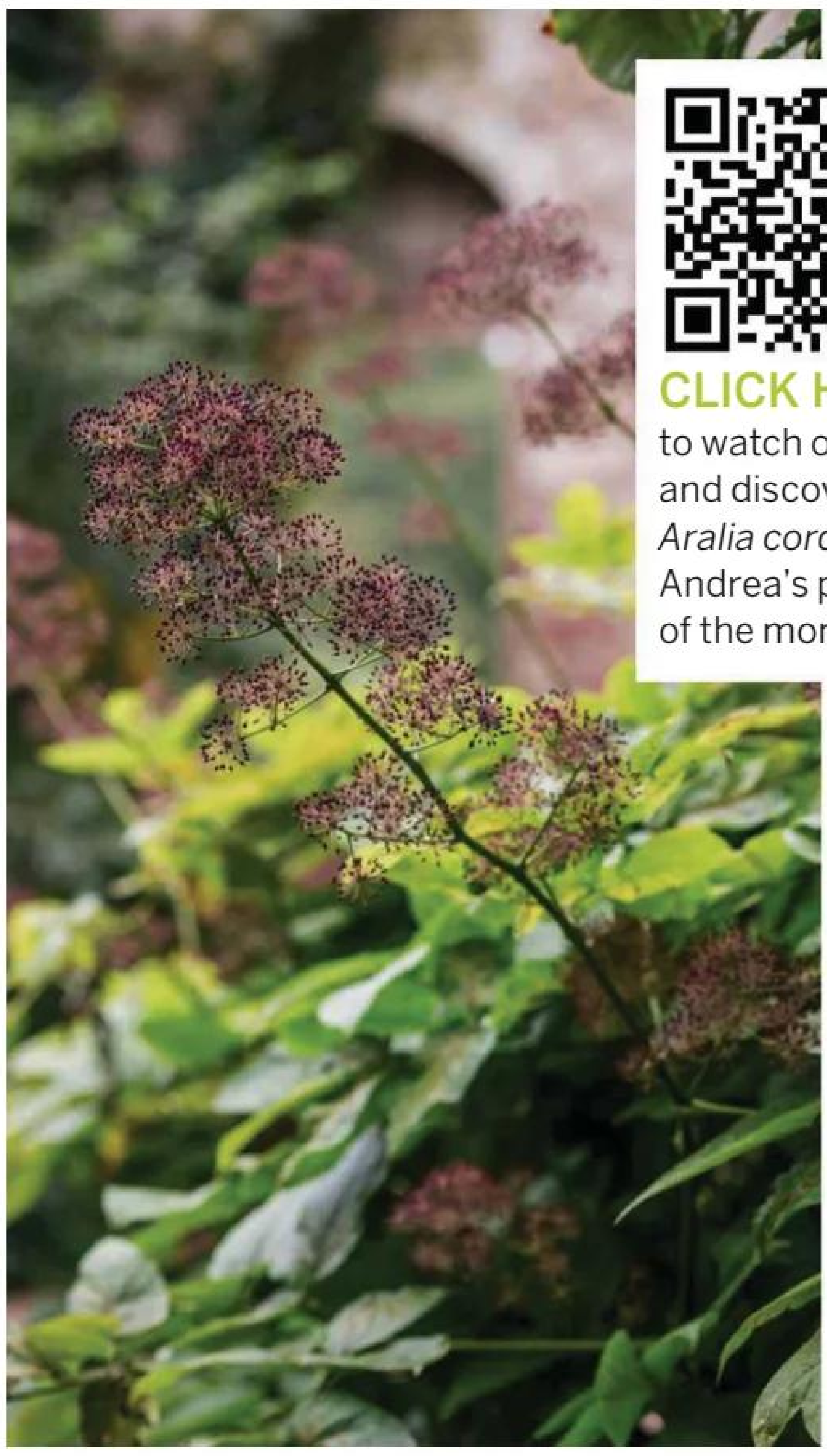
Height and spread 1.8m x 1.5m.
Origin Garden (species China).
Conditions Moist, well-draining, humus-rich soils; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest May – early November.

CALYCANTHUS OCCIDENTALIS

A deciduous suckering shrub of loose, upright, and vigorous habit, quickly creating a thicket with large, lance-shaped, mid-green leaves. The terminal flowers resemble small waterlilies in a purplish red, which turn tawny-owl shades within two days. To see this kind of flower on a woody plant is quite intriguing, and its fragrance gets people talking. You either love or hate it; it is the aroma of a wine cellar or rich fermenting fruit. However, to fully appreciate its scent you need to stick your nose right in there.

Height and spread 3m x 4m.
Origin Endemic to California.
Conditions Moist, well-draining, moderately rich soils; full sun to part shade, but best in dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest Late June – September.





CLICK HERE to watch our video, and discover why *Aralia cordata* is Andrea's plant of the month.

ARALIA CORDATA

This sturdy perennial is a big one. Its beautiful, statuesque natural presence suits our castle ruin well, and it is a top choice for a woodland garden and its fringes. In sheltered locations, it will maintain its structure through the winter. The large foliage is pinnately compound, and its 60cm-long, white inflorescences will radiate in dappled shade. They transform into attractive seedheads of purple berries, which I love using in autumnal floral arrangements, but I also share with the birds.

Height and spread 3m x 2m.
Origin Japan, Korea, and east-central to southern China.
Conditions Moist, well-draining, humus-rich soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Flowers August – September; seedheads from October.

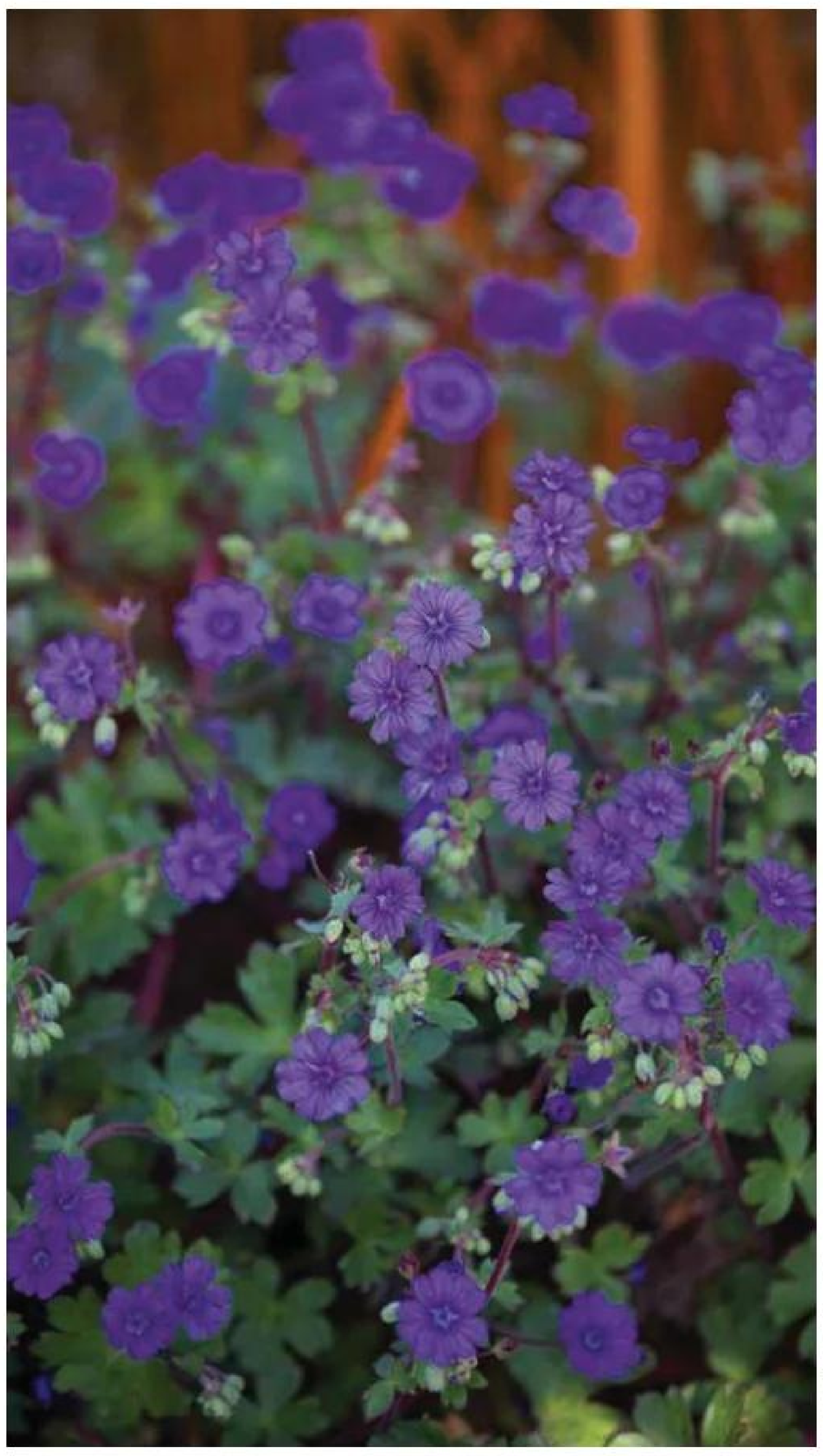
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. Hardiness ratings given where available.

Angelica sylvestris is a robust wildflower with attractive purplish stems that carry white domed umbels, often with a pink tinge when young

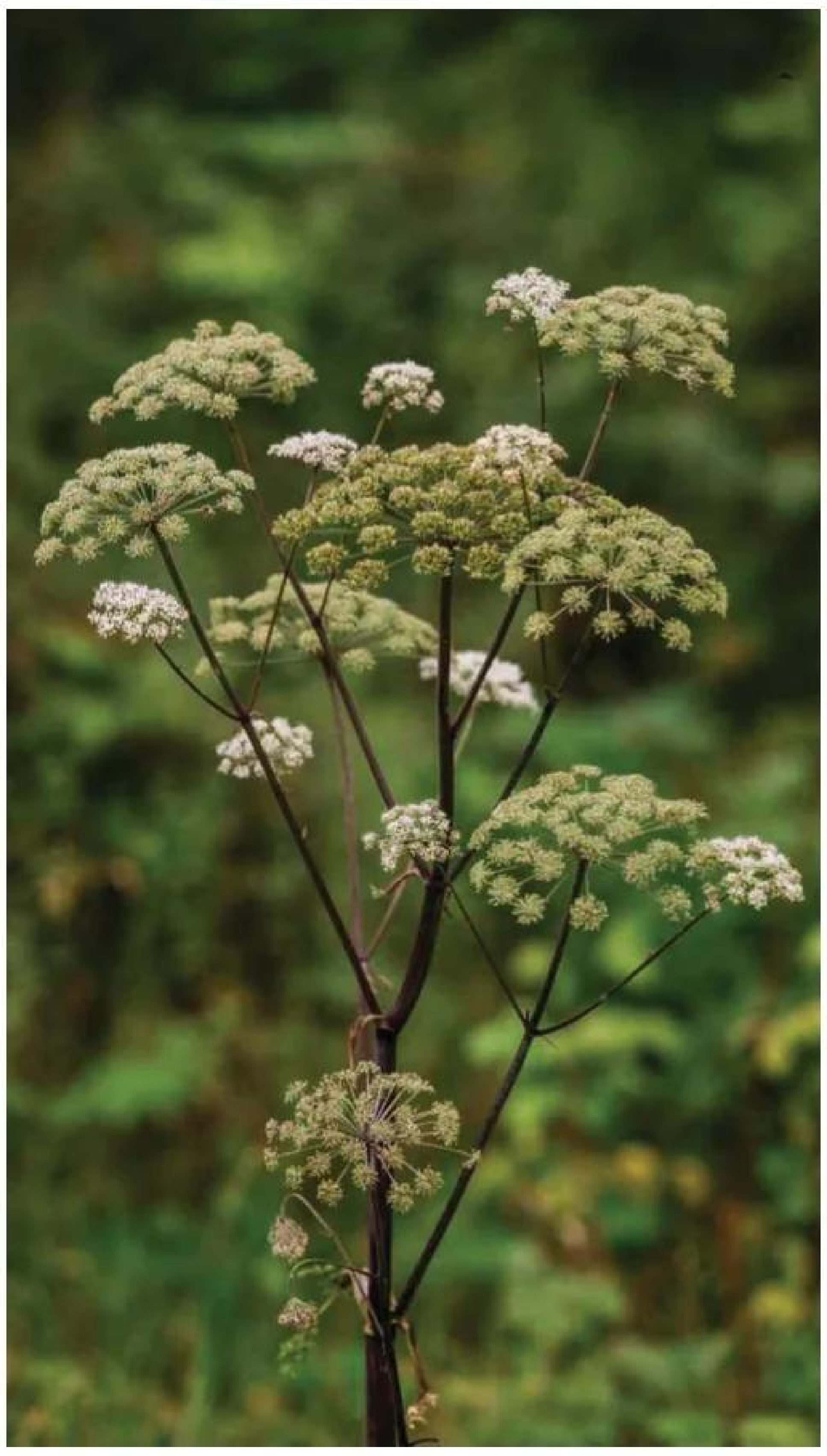
GERANIUM PYRENAICUM 'BILL WALLIS'

This perennial has a lovely lax sprawling habit, showing off its tiny vivid purple-blue flowers well above the small lobed foliage, which can be semi-evergreen in milder areas. It spreads, so you should cut it back before it sets seed, or have a firm hand on weeding it. Anyway, I like its daintiness, and being able to fill those dry nooks and crannies around the garden. It has been a bit capricious at Lowther, but I put this down to extremely wet winters in the past two years.

Height and spread 50cm x 50cm.
Origin Pyrenees across Europe to Iran and western North Africa.
Conditions Moist, well-draining soils; full sun to part shade. Tolerates periods of drought.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest May – early October.



RICHARD BLOOM



ANGELICA SYLVESTRIS

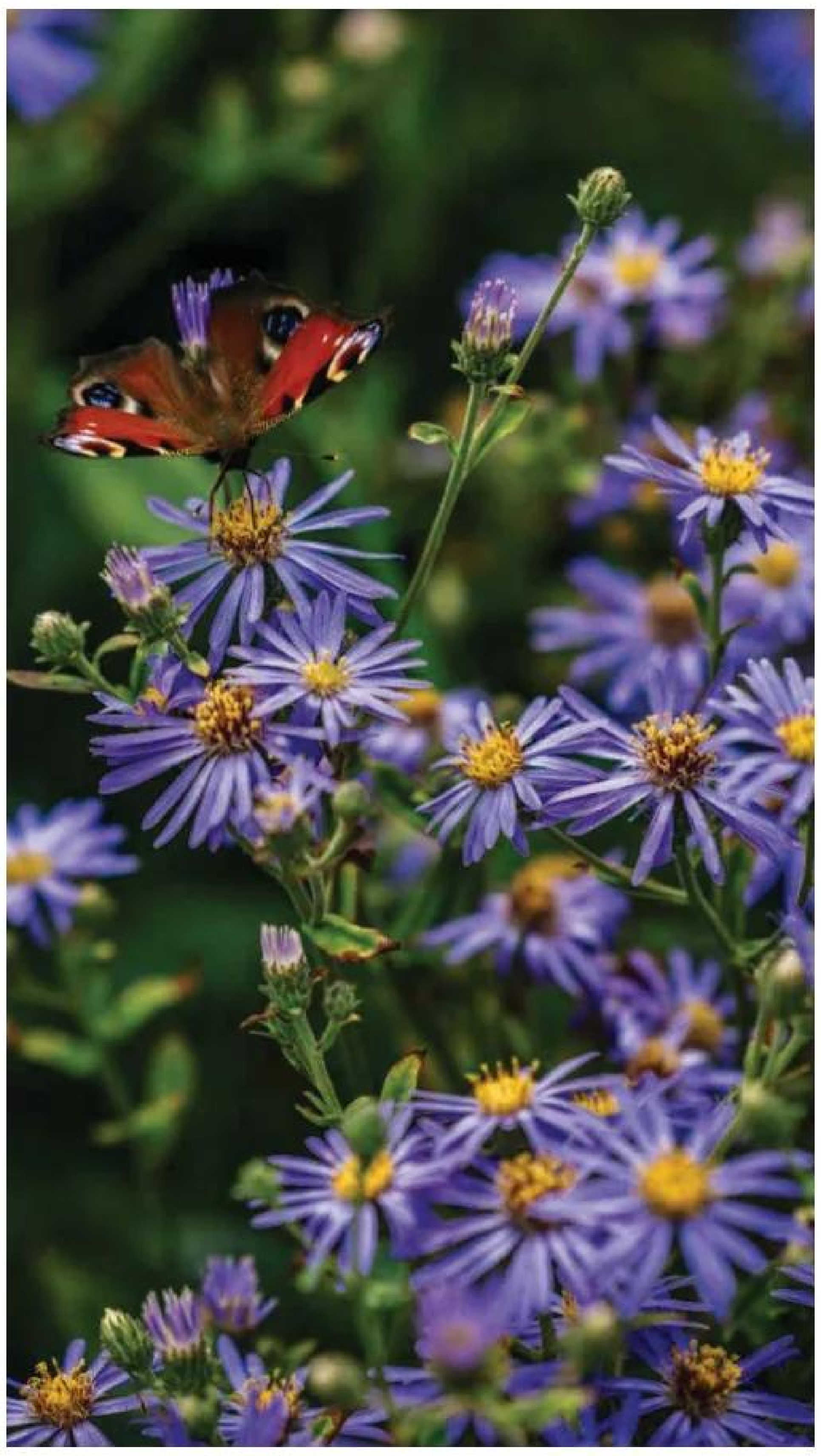
A robust wildflower that behaves like a biennial or short-lived perennial, with attractive purplish stems that carry white, domed umbels, often with a pink tinge when young. The basal foliage is pinnately divided, and the uppermost leaves are reduced to inflated sheaths that enclose a flower bud. It is commonly found in wet meadows and along the edges of open woodlands. We encourage it to self-seed and populate our damp long-grass areas with the native meadowsweet, adding interest and being another late-summer food source for many pollinators.

Height and spread 2m x 50cm.
Origin Europe, including Britain.
Conditions Moist, well-drained to poorly drained soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-7b.
Season of interest July – September.

EURYBIA X HERVEYI

Still known to some as *Aster macrophyllus* 'Twilight', this is one of the early flowering lavender-blue asters, creating an incredible floral profusion above neat basal foliage, which acts like a groundcover. Its branching flower stems are self-supporting. You can quickly grow this one at the front of the border; it has an excellent foliar skirt, which I have found genuinely mildew-resistant. It is my go-to aster; I prefer it to so many others because of its attributes and its wilder look, most fitting for a naturalistic planting scheme. It is beloved by many pollinators, especially the peacock butterfly.

Height and spread 1m x 60cm.
Origin Northeast USA.
Conditions Moist, well-draining soils; full sun to part shade. Will tolerate dry periods.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest July – September.



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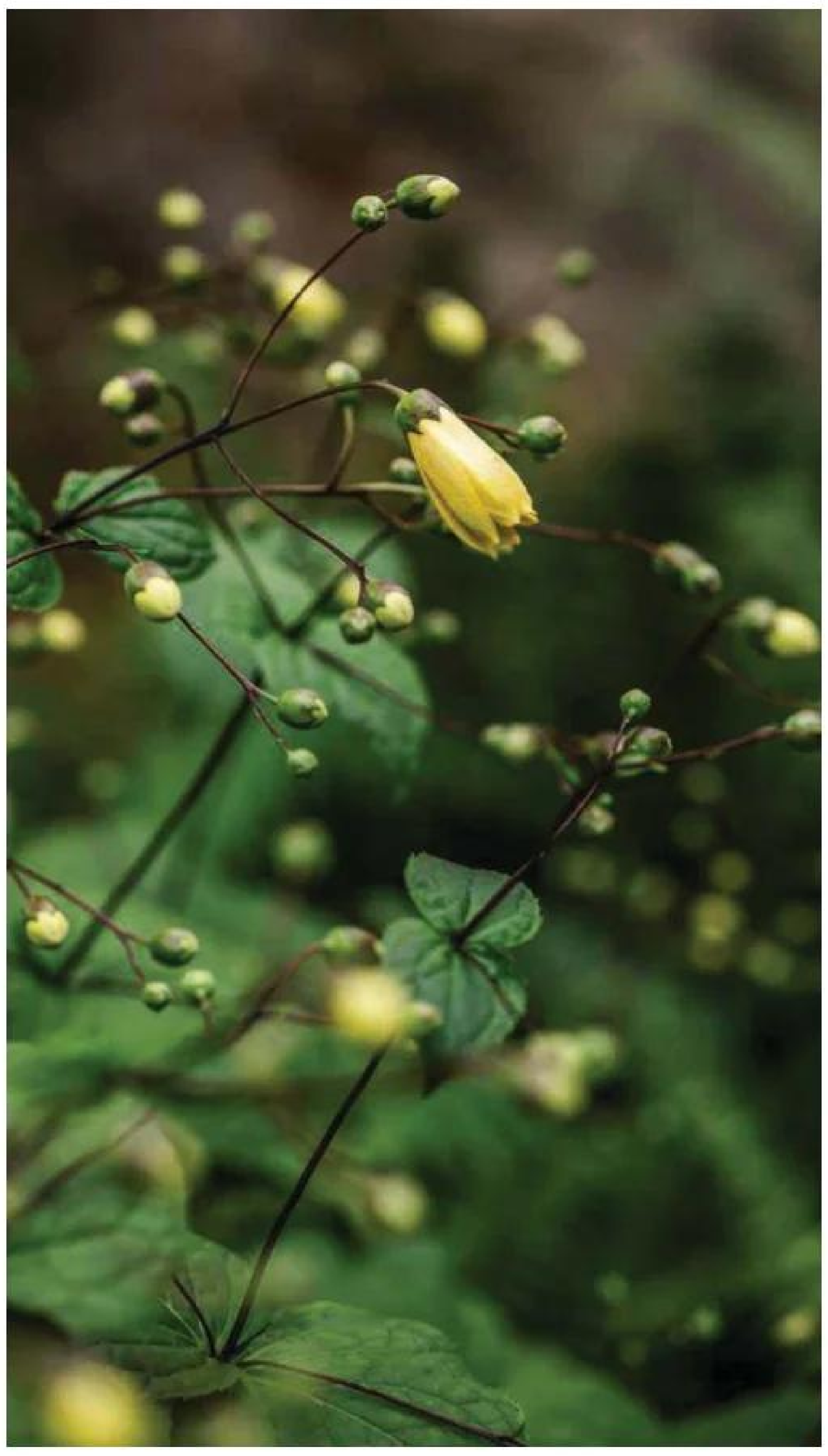
SOIL ASSOCIATION ORGANIC

> I love the simplicity of the tall, narrow, white floral spires of *Bistorta amplexicaulis* 'Alba', which elegantly light up a border



KIRENGESHOMA PALMATA

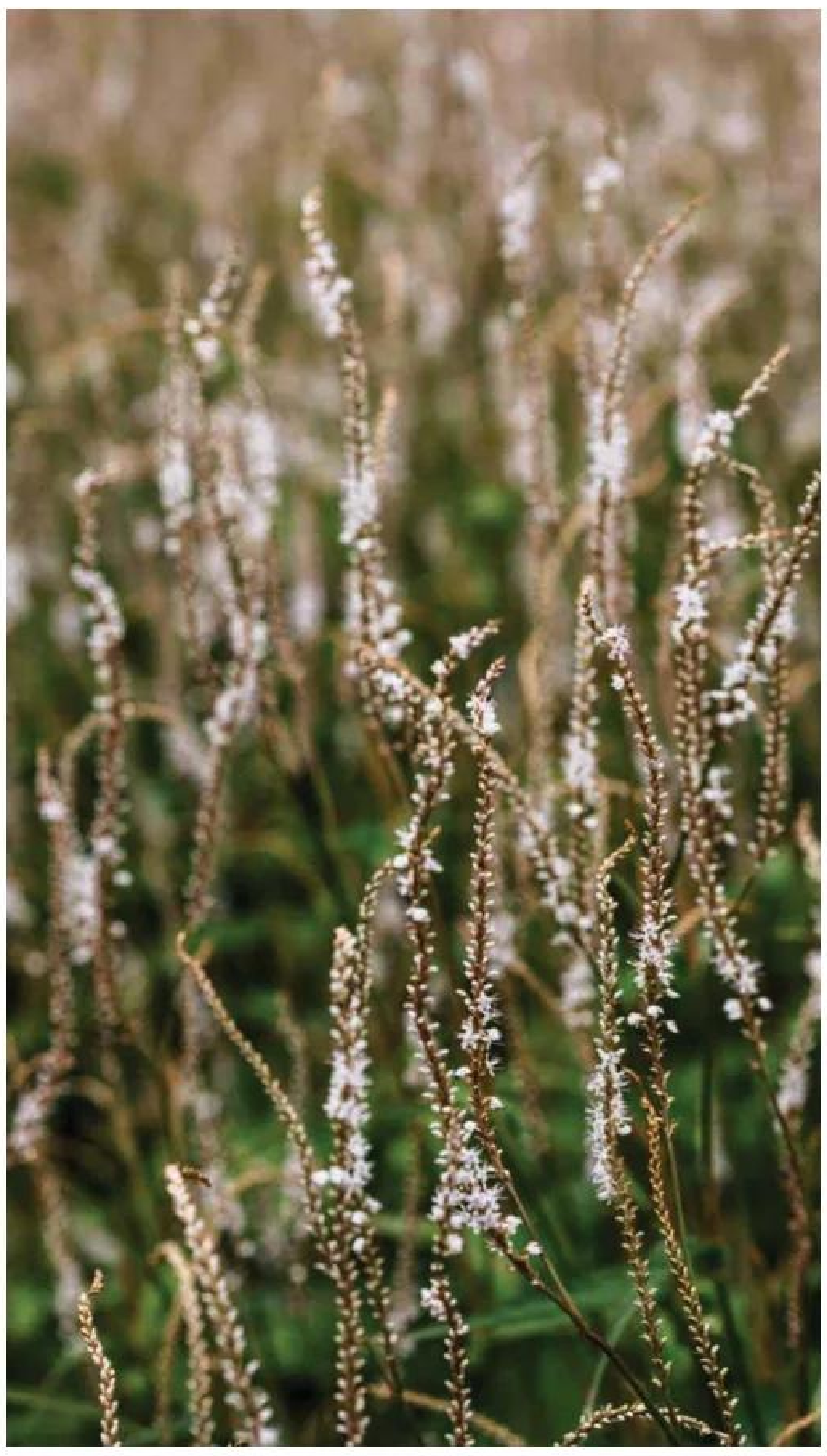
This fantastic woodlander captures your interest from the moment it emerges from the ground. It forms impressive clumps with its maroon-coloured stems and irregularly palmate leaves. The swelling flower buds, arranged in open sprays, open to narrow, bell-shaped, buttery-yellow flowers with a waxy texture. We grow it in the sheltered corners of the castle ruin, and we look forward to giving it a bigger stage in the upcoming planting of the Rock Garden and Japanese Garden, designed by Dan Pearson.

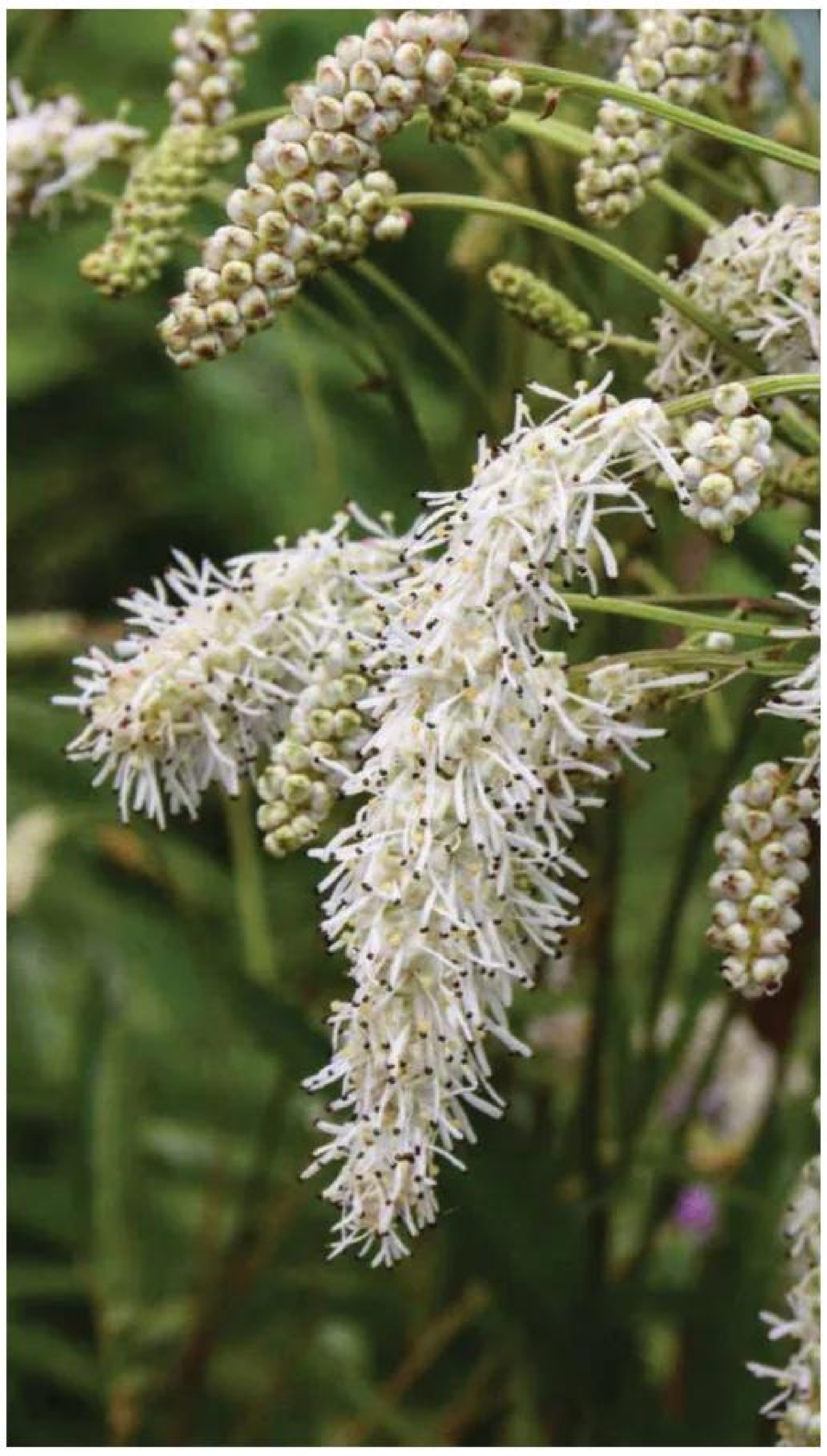
Height and spread 1.2m x 1m.
Origin Japan, Korea, China.
Conditions Moist, well-draining, humus-rich, slightly acidic soils; part to full shade, but best in dappled shade and sheltered from cold wind.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest August – September.

BISTORTA AMPLEXICAULIS 'ALBA'

I love the simplicity of the tall, narrow, white floral spires that elegantly light up a border; it is another stalwart for a northern climate. The foliage covers the ground with large, oval, pointy leaves that emerge relatively late in the spring, so combines well with hellebores or aquilegias. Late frosts can burn its young foliage, but this vigorous perennial will quickly push through again in favourable conditions. Needs some control or it will infringe on neighbours. AGM.

Height and spread 1.5m x 1m.
Origin Western Himalaya.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich soils; full sun to part shade. Will tolerate poorly drained soils.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
Season of interest Late July – mid-October.





HORTILENS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

SANGUISORBA TENUIFOLIA VAR. *ALBA*

Wiry, tall flower stems, topped with nodding, slender, white bottlebrush flowerheads, rise from attractive lacy, fern-like leaves that take on a red tinge in autumn. I like to pepper this clump-forming perennial through a planting, creating elegant, vertical interest that moves gracefully in the summer breeze. I've paired it with frothy moor grasses, but also used it to accentuate the stiff vertical lines of *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'. Once established, it can be divided in autumn or spring.

Height and spread 1.8m x 60cm.
Origin China, Korea, Japan, east Siberia.
Conditions Moist, poor- to well-draining, humus-rich soils (does not like to dry out); full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest July – September.

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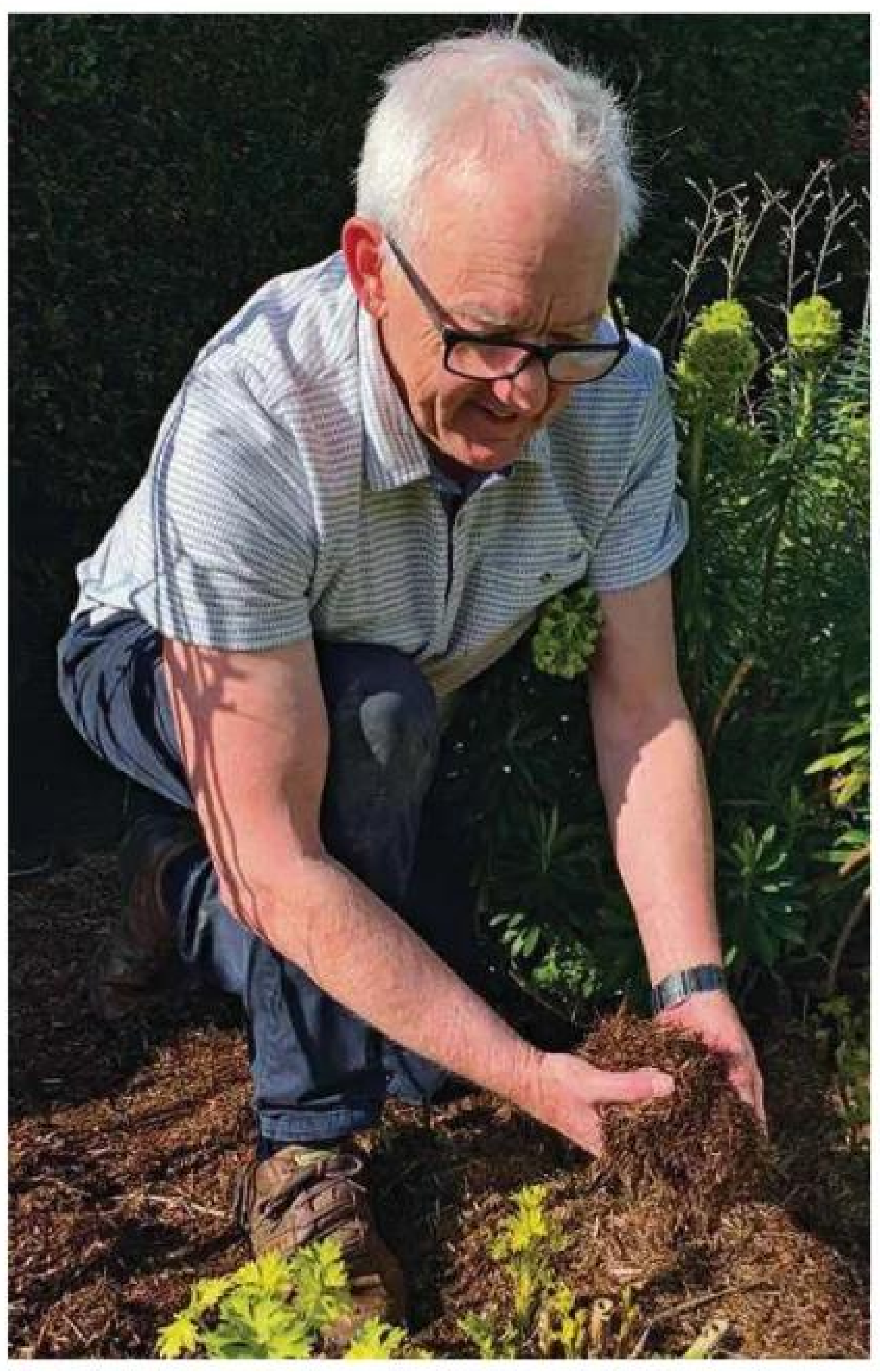

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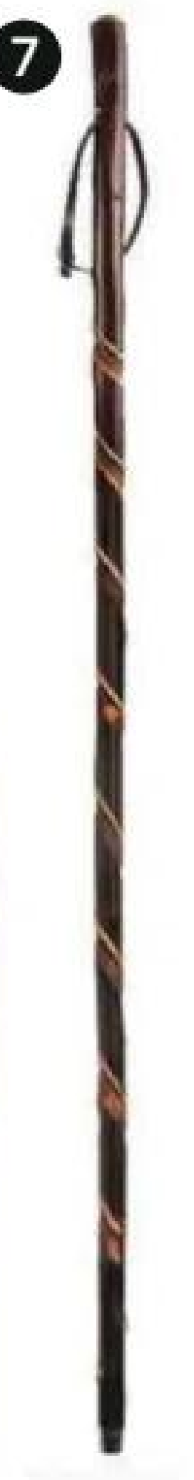

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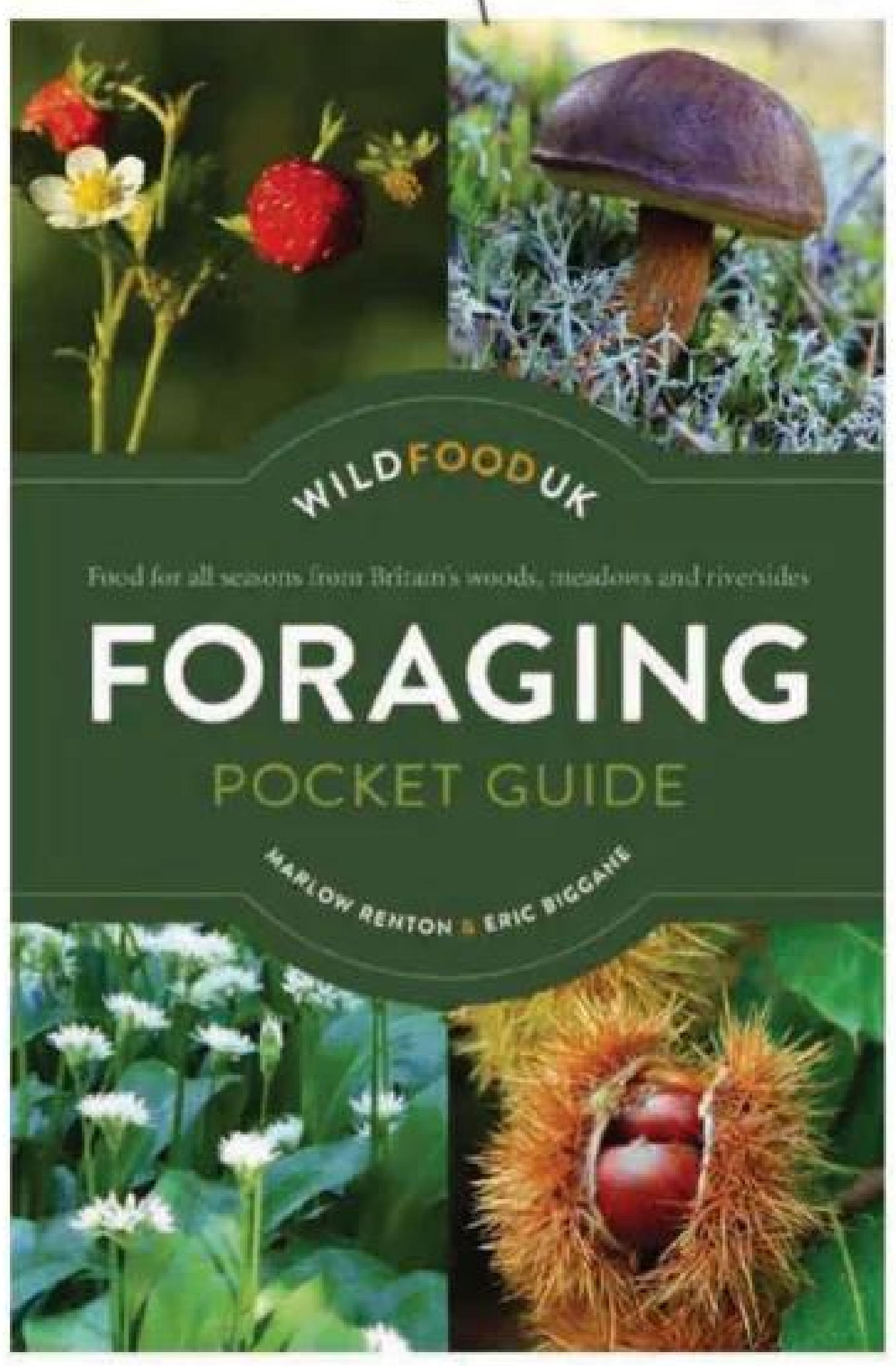
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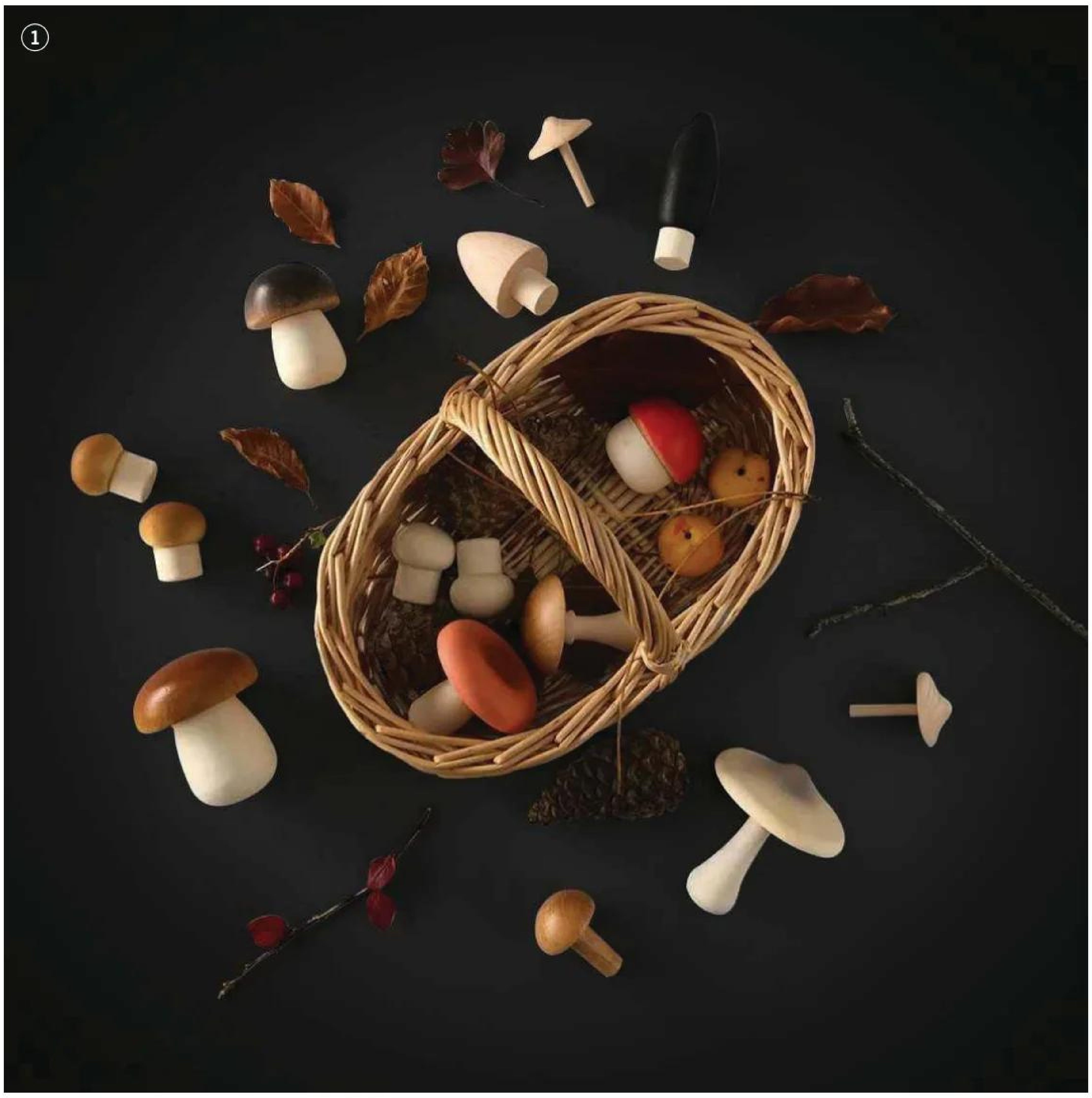

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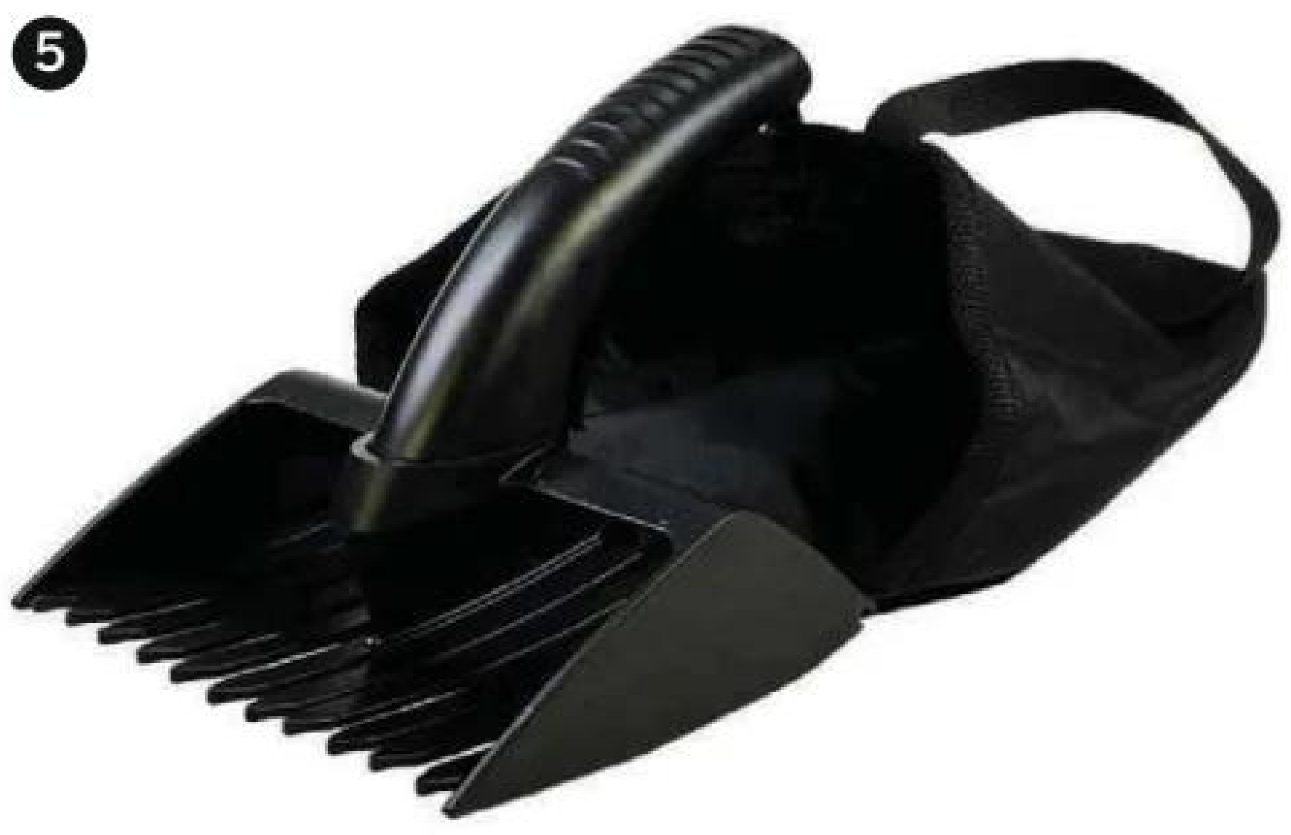

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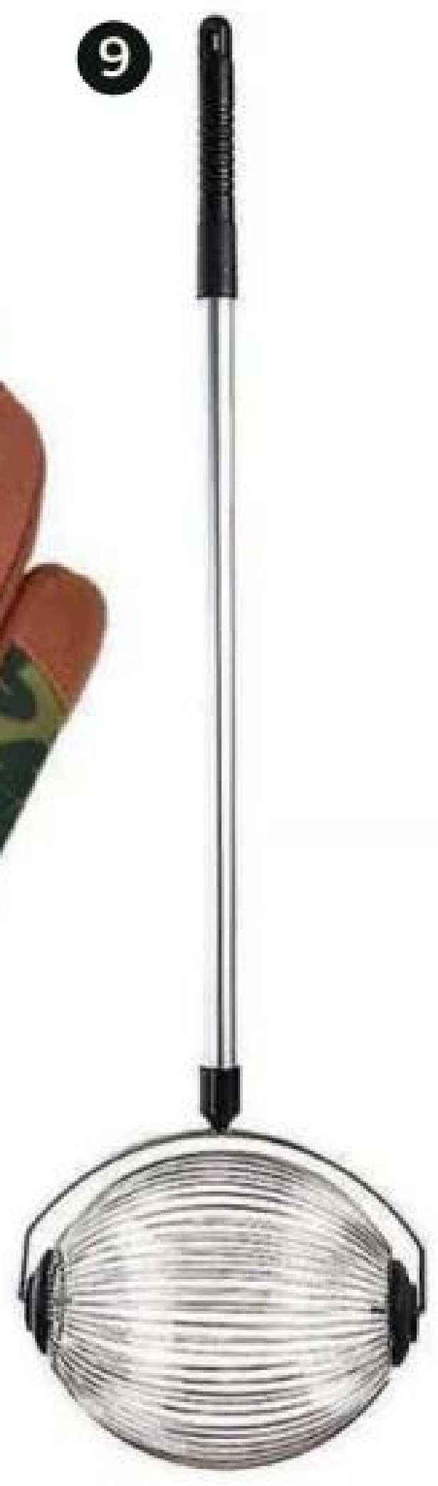

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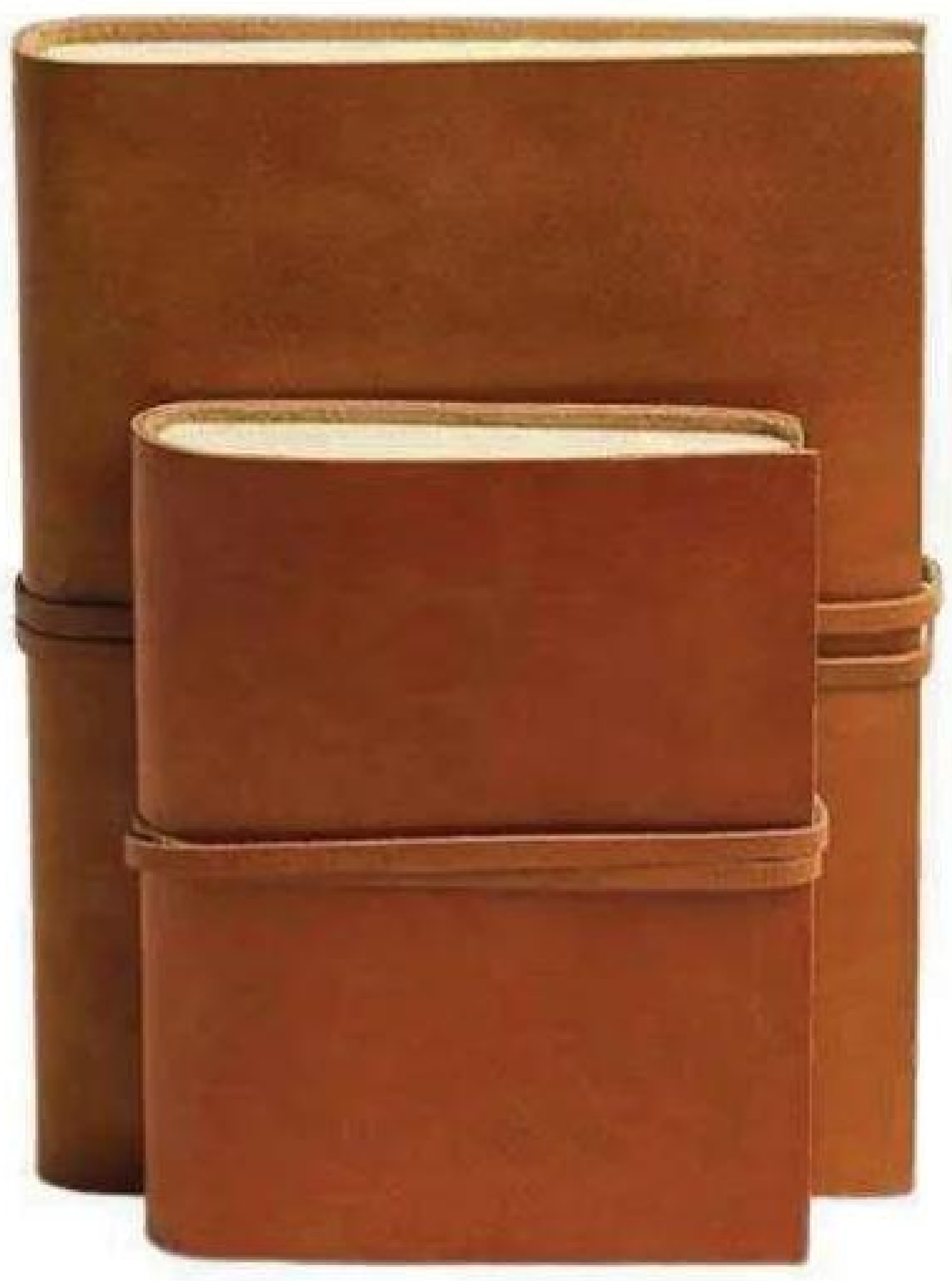

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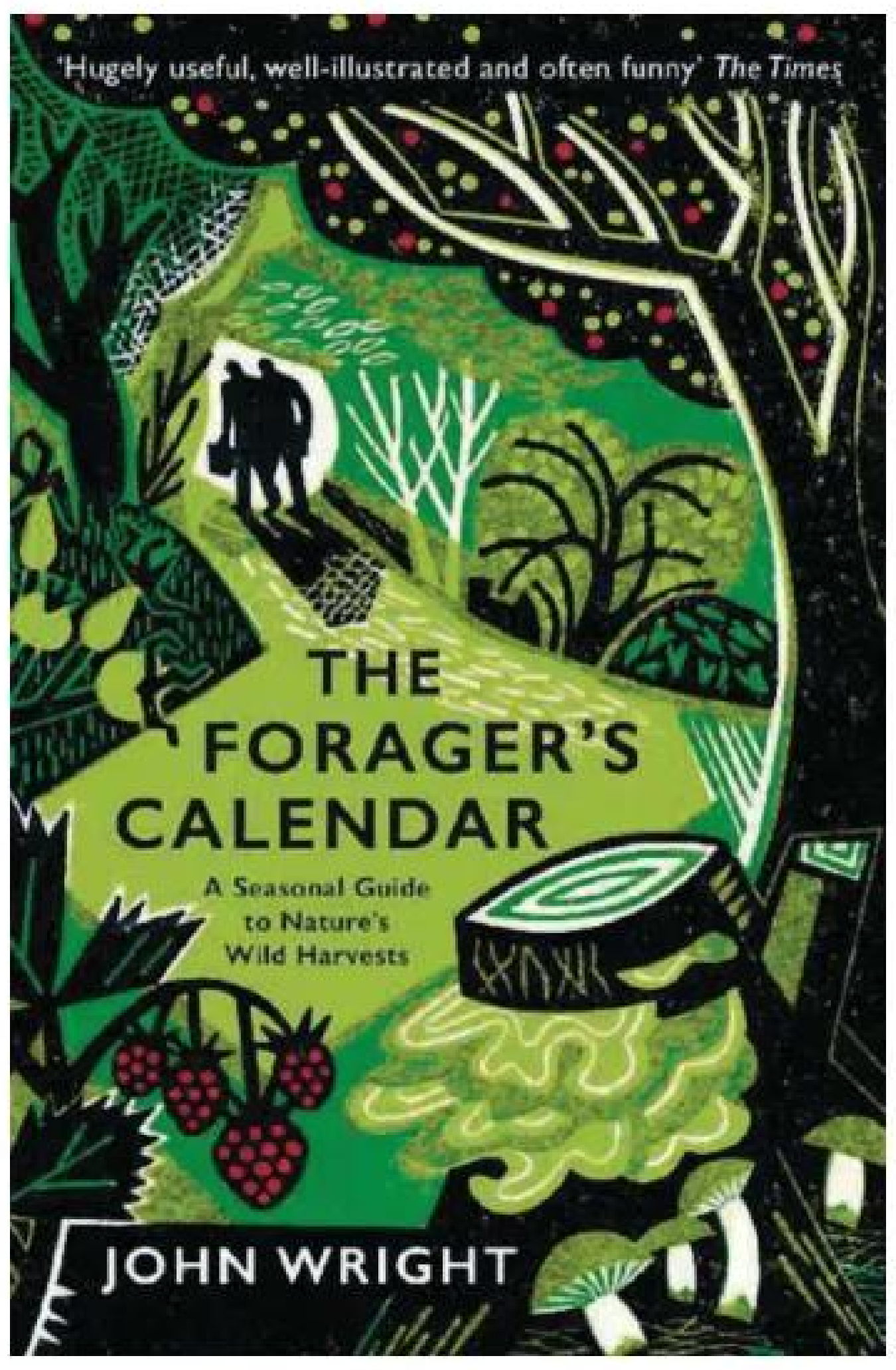
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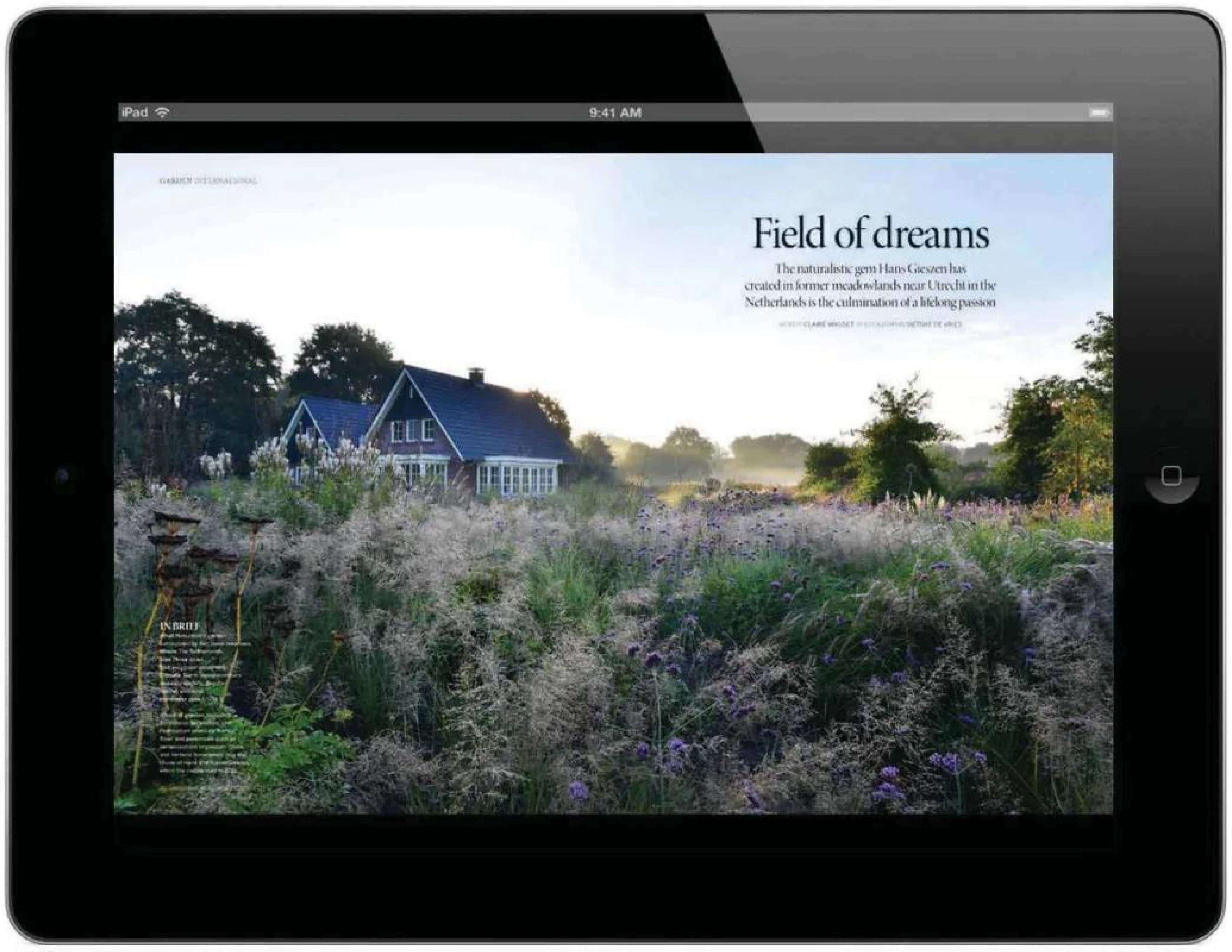

Field of dreams

The naturalistic gem Hans Gieszen has created in former meadowlands near Utrecht in the Netherlands is the culmination of a lifelong passion

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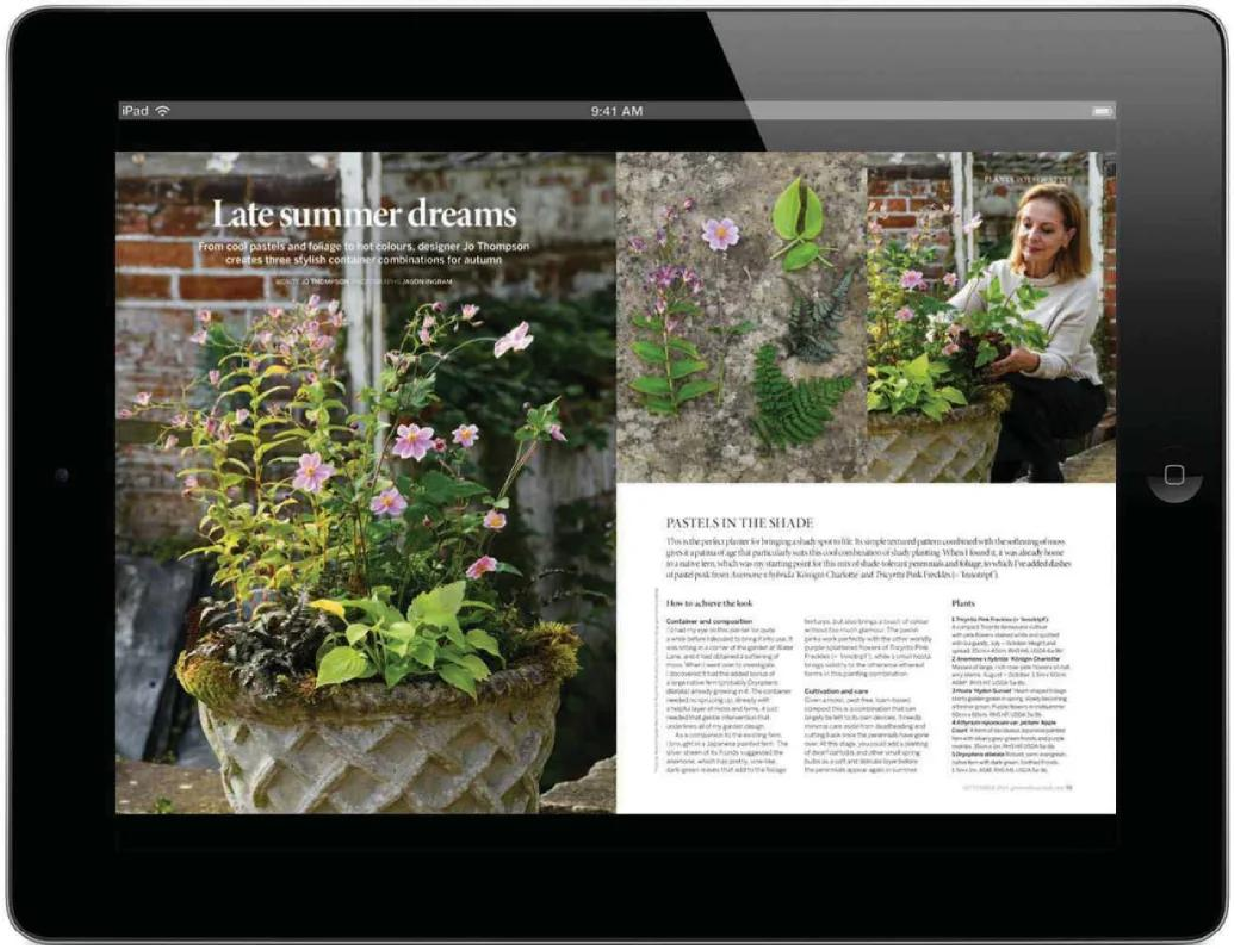

Late summer dreams

From cool pastels and foliage to hot colours, designer Jo Thompson creates three stylish container combinations for autumn

PASTELS IN THE SHADE

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PLANTING MEMORIES

Many of the plants in **Nigel Slater**'s garden hold deeper meaning – some joyful, others more poignant – but all add another layer of pleasure when they bloom

ILLUSTRATION **PAUL WEARING** PORTRAIT **JOHN CAMPBELL**

My friend Adrian once arrived at my door with pots of bluebells, a gift of bulbs dug from his garden. "I'm afraid there might be a few 'strays' in there too; I couldn't separate them," he said, handing me three rammed pots of *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, the native English variety, with sky-blue bells hanging elegantly to one side of the stem.

Adrian was the person who rescued me when I arrived in London in my early twenties, something of a lost soul. I stayed in his spare room until I could find a place of my own, and he remained one of my dearest friends. I became rather fond of his old-fashioned garden with its rose arbour, pots of agapanthus and tubs of houseleeks. In spring, the bluebells ran amok at the bottom of his garden and reminded me of my childhood home with its hazel coppice and bluebell wood.

In the 25 years since they were planted, his generous gift of blue flowers has slowly vanished, but the 'strays' that arrived among the bulbs have thrived to the point of frustration. Tucked away in his pots, I would later discover, were seedlings of bright-yellow Welsh poppies, *Papaver cambricum*, whose delicate, paper-thin petals are charming in the right place – but my garden is not that place. Their fragile canary-yellow flowers come up in profusion each spring, looking oddly out of place among the green-and-white woodland-style planting. They spread like wildfire.

Now here's the rub: I cannot get rid of them. Not that I am beyond a bit of robust weeding – it's because of the memories those pesky yellow poppies hold. Unbeknown to me at the time, Adrian was at the start of a long illness from which he would never recover. When he died, those bluebells, and their unwanted yellow stowaways,

▷

> I cherish the plants that remind me of much-loved people or places. It adds another layer to the deep pleasure they bring to the garden

▷ came to mean more me to than almost any other plant in the garden. To pull them up and throw them on the compost heap is, even now, unthinkable. Those little flowers are completely entwined with memories of our friendship, and his kindness.

I cherish the plants that remind me of much-loved people or places. It adds another layer to the deep pleasure they bring to the garden. They include the little *Malus domestica* 'Discovery' apple tree that will forever be linked to the happiest years of my childhood, with the blossom I waited for each spring as eagerly as its early, pink-flushed fruits. The deep-purple violets whose scent takes me instantly back to the walk to school. The dancing heads of the pale aquilegias so adored by my mother.

I could walk around the garden ticking off the plants that hold good memories, planted especially because their perfume takes me elsewhere, like the jasmine that carries me so effortlessly back to sultry evenings spent in Kerala. The azaleas on my roof terrace remind me of spring trips to Japan, and large-trumpeted daffodils of a long illuminating spring spent in the Lake District, deeply in love. These plants are admired for themselves, but, if I am honest, are grown as much for their associations with places I would rather be than north London.

I grow plants that bring only good vibes to the garden. Anything negative gets short shrift. (My stepmother's cacti collecting habit is the main reason you'll will never find a spiky *Pilosocereus pachycladus* 'Azureus' in my house.) I suspect I probably grew runner beans as much for the happiest of memories, of hiding among their scarlet flowers on a sunny summer's day, as for their delicious green pods. Likewise, the pots of paperwhites I grow each winter remind me of a dearly loved friend, and cosmos bring back the boundless joy of the first packet of seeds I ever planted. These additions to the garden go way beyond their beauty or usefulness.

There are many reasons we choose to grow certain plants, and I see no reason why pure nostalgia or an association with a loved one shouldn't be one of them, but sometimes the decision is made for us. Kind or well-meaning friends bringing plants as gifts is one reason why we may end up nurturing something we had no plan for. How many times have I heard "I can't get rid of this, because so-and-so gave it to me". Well, yes, you can, but in most cases you are stuck with it. Perhaps the only good thing about slugs is that we can blame them for chomping up an unwanted present.

The upside of filling your garden with plants that evoke memories is that they return each year, which is especially delightful when the person whose memory they evoke cannot. The downside is that when that plant fails, as they sometimes do, it feels like a stab to the heart. But when they do bloom, they do so with a reminder of good times and wonderful friends, or much-missed family and loved ones. They give us a moment to stop and remember, to celebrate a friendship, a place or memory. Even, I can assure you, Adrian's yellow bloody poppies. □

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IN BRIEF

What Naturalistic garden surrounded by flat, open meadows.
Where The Netherlands.
Size Three acres.
Soil Very poor sandy soil.
Climate Warm sunny summers and cold winters. Regular rainfall and wind.
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Waves of grasses, including *Sporobolus heterolepis* and *Pennisetum orientale* 'Karley Rose' and perennials, such as *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Diane' and *Verbena bonariensis*, hug the house of Hans and Yuxian Gieszen, which the couple built in 2011.

Field of dreams

The naturalistic gem Hans Gieszen has created in former meadowlands near Utrecht in the Netherlands is the culmination of a lifelong passion

WORDS CLAIRE MASSET PHOTOGRAPHS SIETSKE DE VRIES

I added plants that self-seed,
included grasses, then
realised the next step
was to try matrix planting

Ever since his mother gave him seeds as a small boy, gardening has been a passion for Hans Gieszen. He is completely self-taught, relying on garden visits and books for instruction, with one book in particular, *Dream Plants for the Natural Garden* by Henk Gerritsen and Piet Oudolf, influencing his style. “It was fascinating,” says Hans, remembering his first encounter with the book. “All those photos – pictures with mists and these tall and low plants and grasses. I realised I couldn’t do it in my small garden, but I kept dreaming and reading about it.”

Eventually, in 2011, after creating several small gardens, Hans and his wife Yuxian found the perfect spot for their dream garden: three acres of meadowland near Utrecht in the Netherlands. “After we built the house, we lived there for a year and did nothing. We just observed – the light, the sun, the atmosphere.” By 2012, Hans was ready to embark on his biggest horticultural project yet.

“I started with the front garden, planting groups of perennials. I got the right plants, but the groups were too big, so I made them smaller and little by little it came together. Then I added plants that self-seed. I had read about spontaneous self-seeding. Then I included grasses. And then I realised the next step was to try matrix planting.” Hans was following in the creative footsteps of the celebrated Dutch designer Piet Oudolf, and with every step he took, his garden got better.

The site’s poor, sandy soil was never a barrier to his dreams. “The plants I bought had grown in rich humus. To adjust to their new home, they ▷

Close to the house, low-growing clumps of sedum *Hylotelephium telephium* ‘Karfunkelstein’, *Echinacea purpurea*, *Sesleria autumnalis* and *Calamintha nepeta* form a tapestry of textures and colours. Pink *Lythrum salicaria* and fountain grass *Pennisetum orientale* ‘Karley Rose’ bring height and movement while spears of *Verbascum thapsus* add strong vertical accents.

Piet's garden has a lot of
sculpted hedges. He clips. I clip nothing.
When I plant a shrub or tree,
I want to enjoy its natural shape

▷ made deep roots and became tough." Instead of adding compost or fertiliser, Hans relies on an old-fashioned cutting regime. "I cut down all the plants at the end of February; micro-organisms start to work and the soil gets richer."

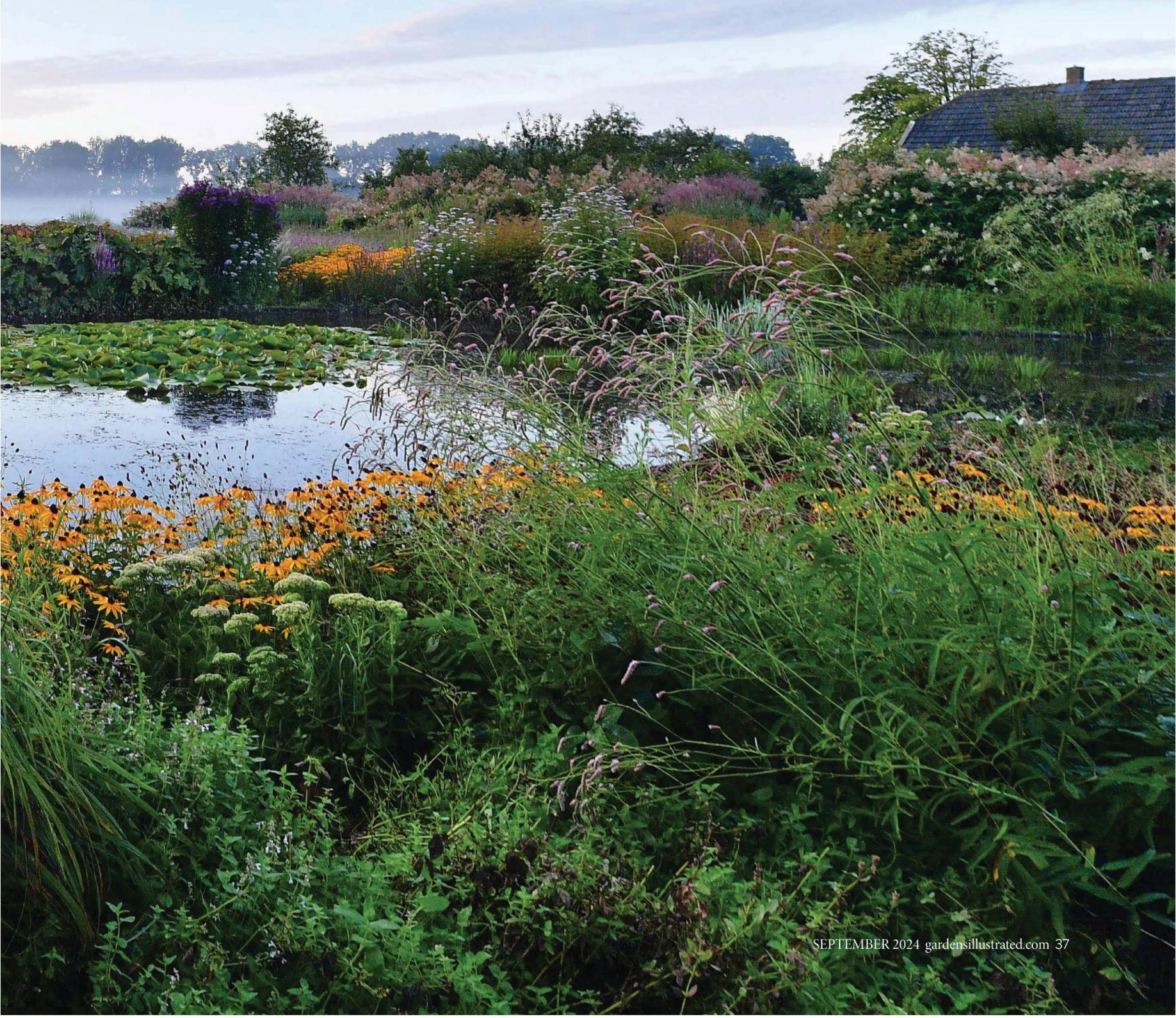
Having experimented and learned lessons in his front garden, Hans felt equipped to tackle the larger sections to the south and west of the house. "Naturalistic gardening means you need to have natural, organic elements, so we made a kidney-shaped pond, added a stream and lots of snaking paths." There was just one exception: next to the house they included two square terraces. Although the paths leading from them are straight at first, they soon start to wind and mingle with the planting.

Unlike Piet Oudolf, Hans likes to keep everything open so he can borrow as much of the landscape as possible. "Piet's garden at Hummelo has a lot of sculpted hedges," says Hans. "He clips. I clip nothing. When I plant a shrub or tree, I want to enjoy its natural shape."

To his matrix base of grasses, Hans adds individual perennials, shrubs and trees. "What you need is a mix of curtains, clouds and statues – lots of different shapes and types," he explains. "If perennials prefer to stand in a group, we make small groups. We allow plants to spread, mostly through seeds, creating spontaneity." Statuesque *Verbascum thapsus* is planted randomly. "Then it randomly self-seeds and does the designing for you. Two-metre-tall *Althaea cannabina* forms clouds with lots of tiny pink dots. It's transparent and combines with other plants that are lower and have different shapes."

The overall effect – a mix of 60 per cent grasses and 40 per cent perennials – is ▷

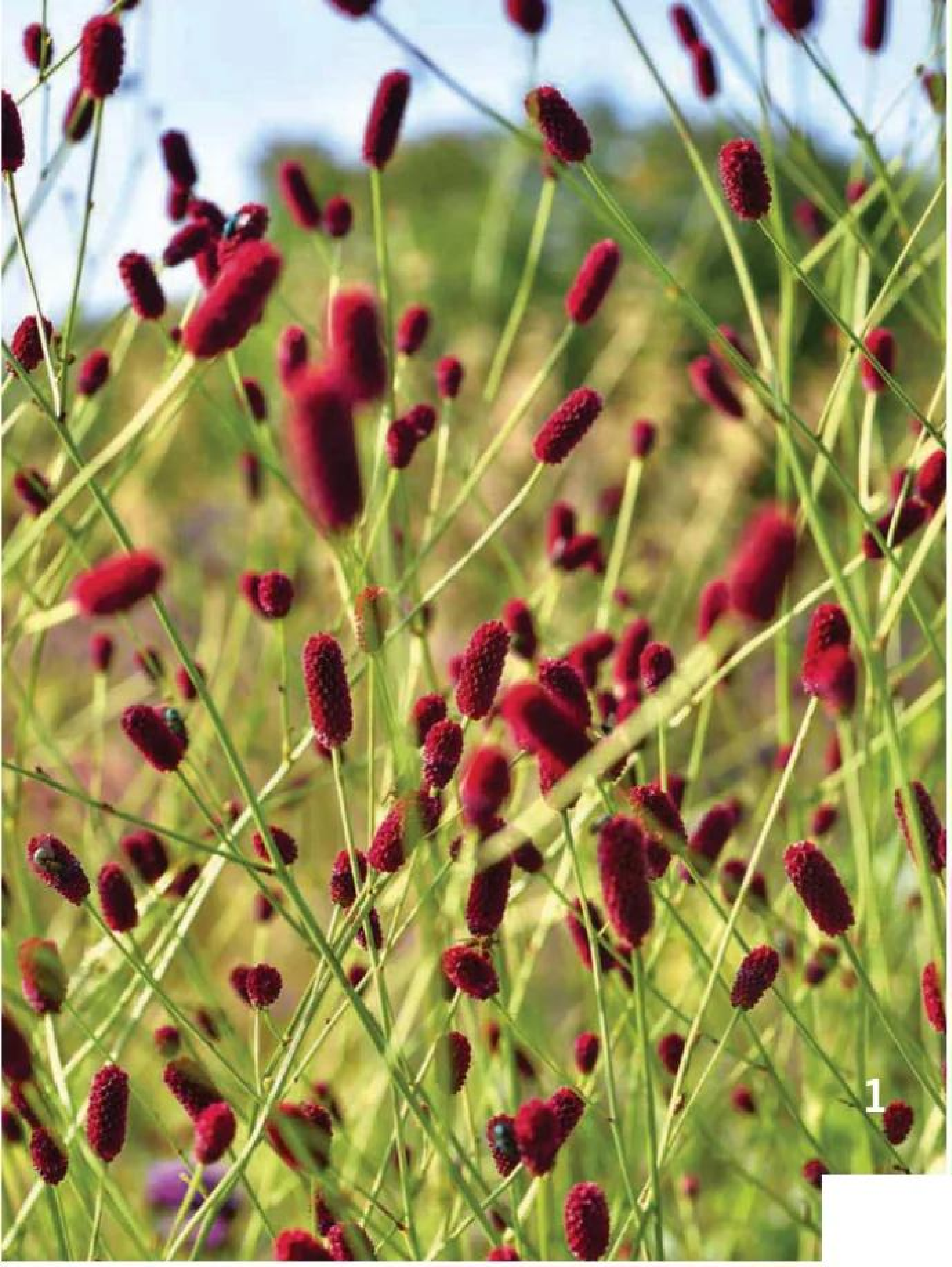
To continue turn to page 40



The waterlily-filled pond is surrounded by planting, including broad-leaved *Darmera peltata*, clump-forming grass *Calamagrostis effusiflora*, tall, purple-flowered *Vernonia arkansana* 'Mammuth', an unknown *Sanguisorba* seedling, pale-pink *Hylotelephium* x *mottramianum* 'Herbstfreude' and bright masses of yellow-flowered *Rudbeckia fulgida*.

What you need is a mix of curtains, clouds and statues – lots of different shapes and types

An exquisite tapestry of silvery white *Veronicastrum virginicum* f. *roseum* 'Pink Glow', muted pink *Echinacea purpurea* and blue-grey globes of *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue'. On the other side of the path, *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Diane' and *Bistorta amplexicaulis* 'Blackfield' lighten up a row of mature trees.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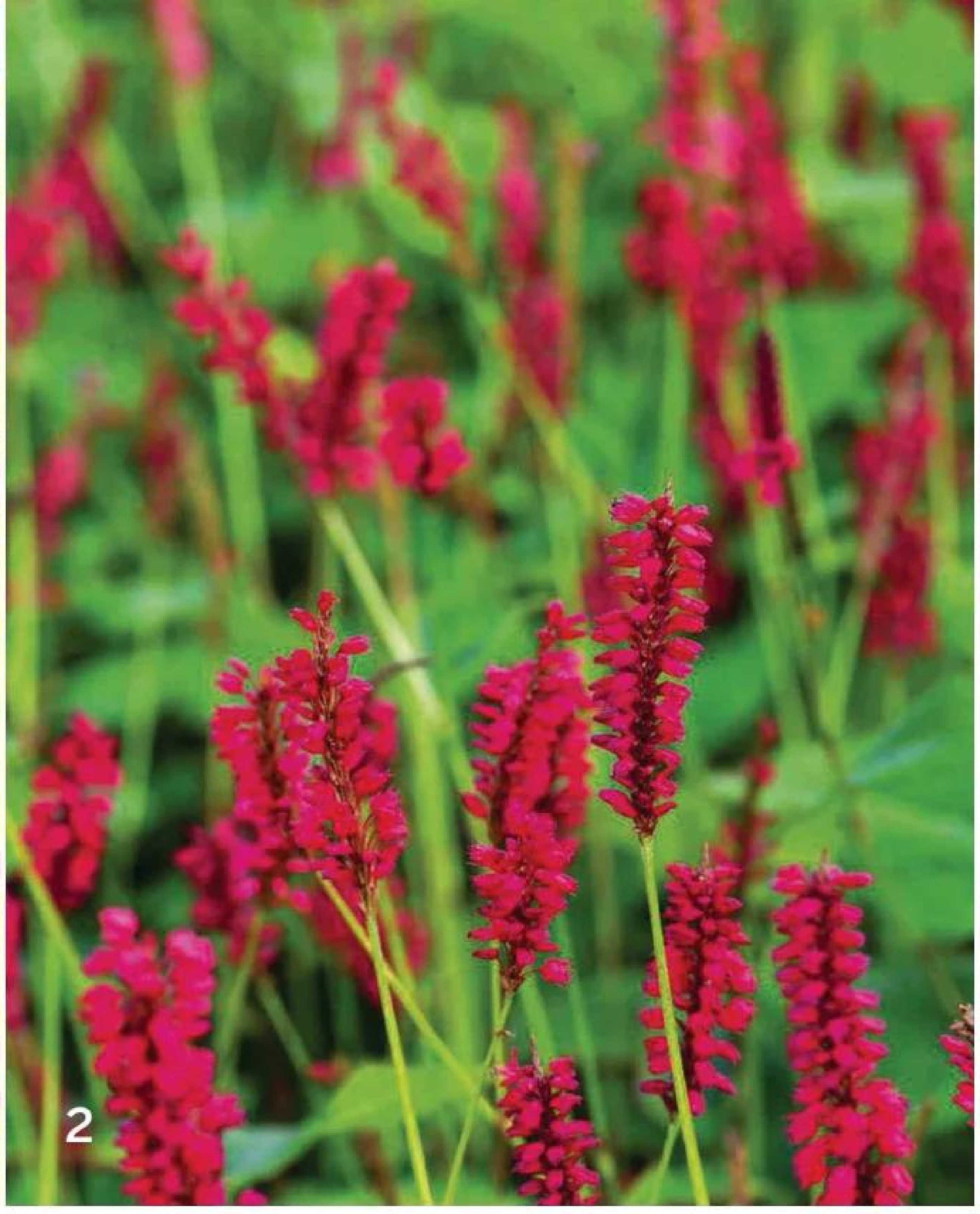
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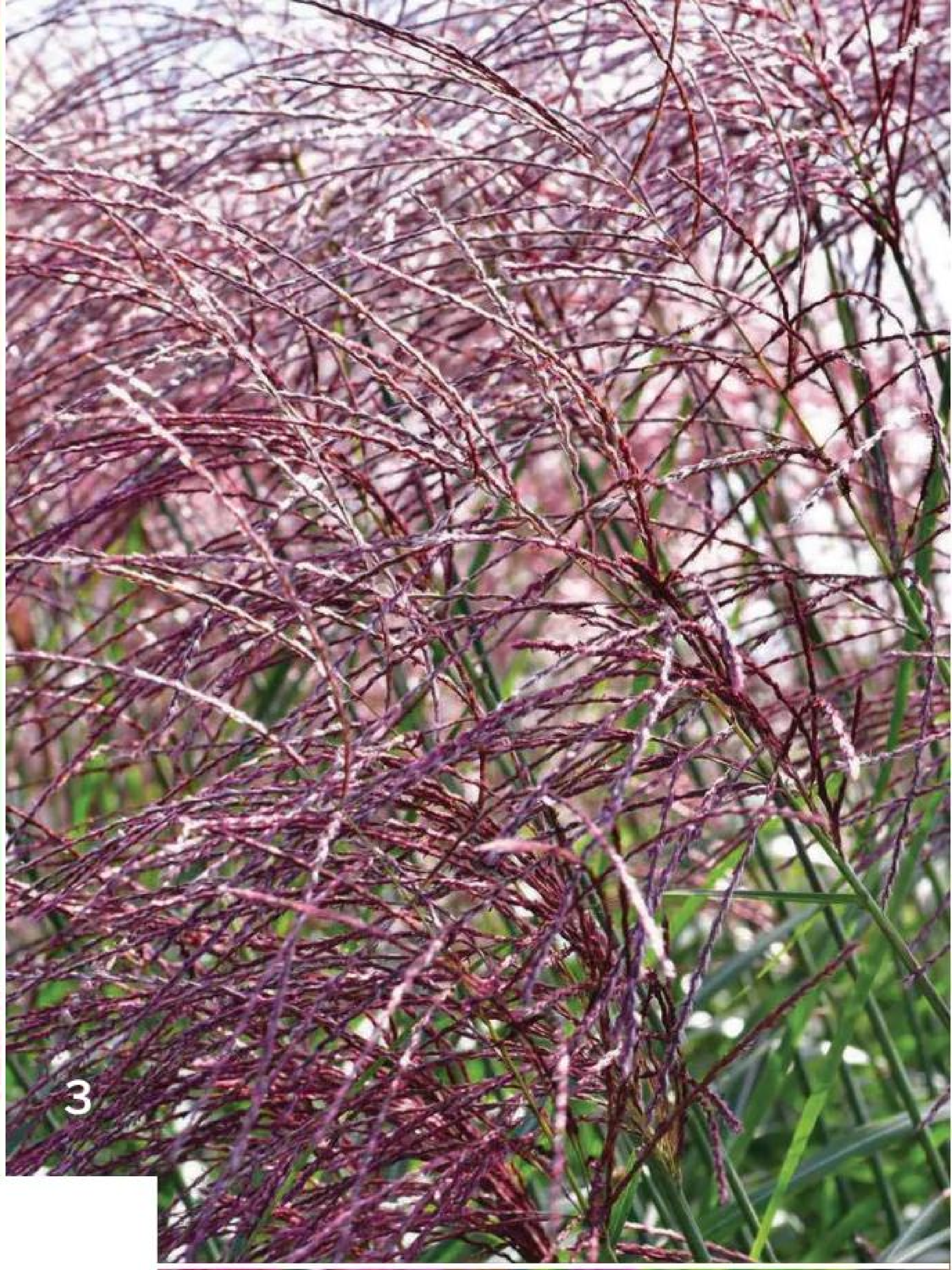
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Hans's top 8 plants

1 *Sanguisorba* 'Cangshan Cranberry' Flowers well until November without flopping over. A great self-seeder that always comes true from seed. Height and spread: 1.9m x 70cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b†.

2 *Bistorta amplexicaulis* 'Blackfield' Starts flowering in July and doesn't stop until the frosts make it collapse. Spikes of rich-red flowers, loved by bees, over dark-green leaves. 70cm x 70cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

3 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus' Flowers are red in September then turn beige followed by a beautiful silvery white. 2.5m x 1m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

4 *Scutellaria incana* 'White Sky' Flowers later than the more common blue downy skullcap. Held on erect stems, it offers welcome off-white dots among the other garden colours. 80cm x 20cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

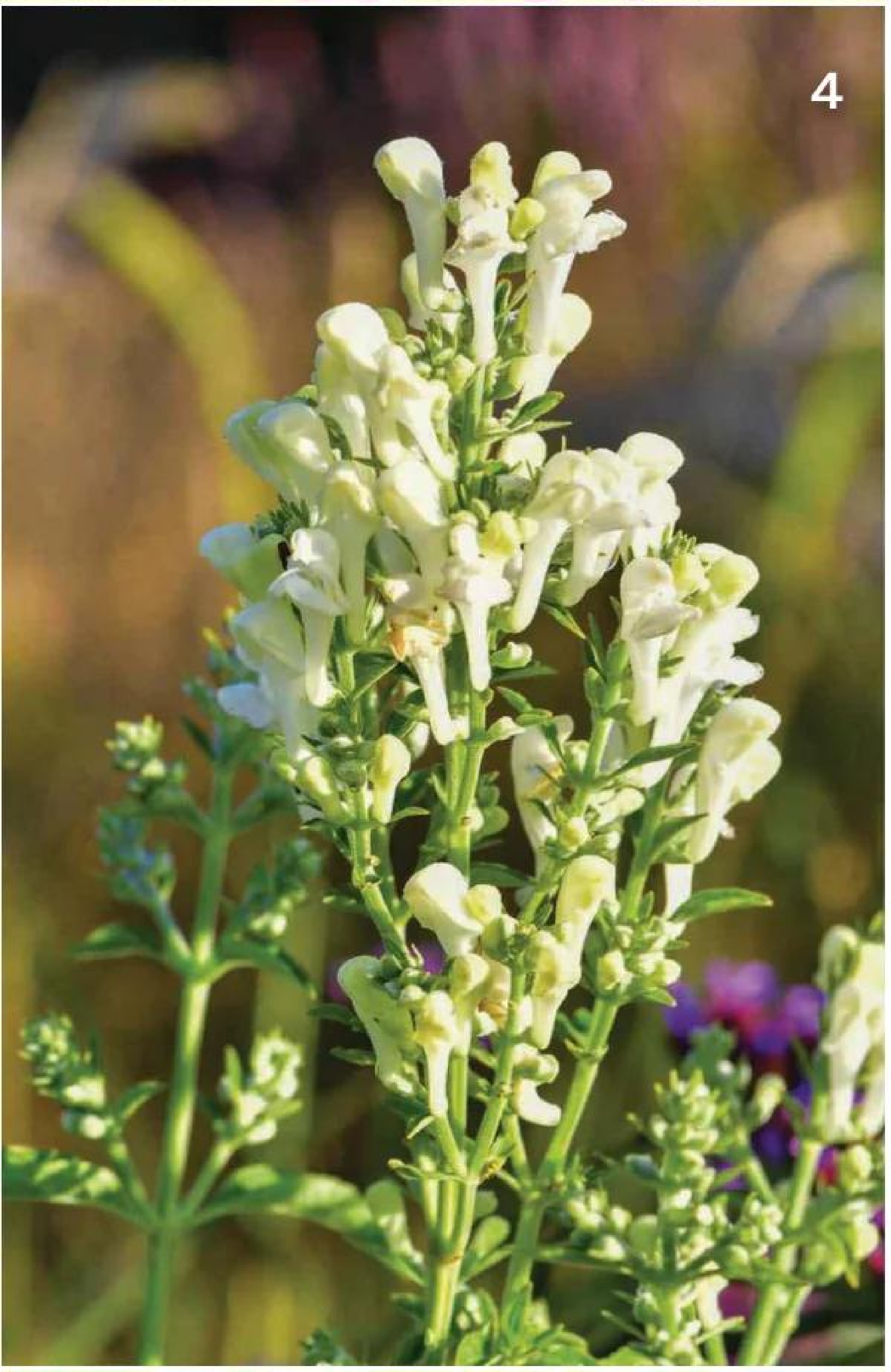
5 *Hylotelephium* 'Abbey Dore' Hans uses this modest sedum as a small accent between calaminthas, seslerias and eryngiums in his gravel garden. Its flowers change from pink to crimson red, and bloom from summer until well into the autumn. 30cm x 40cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

6 *Helianthus giganteus* 'Sheila's Sunshine' An undemanding team player, this spreading helianthus supports other plants with its strong bamboo-like stems. Hans lets the muted, pastel-yellow flowers emerge from clouds of backlit sporobolus. 1.6m x 1.6m. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.

7 *Verbascum thapsus* Hans loves self-seeding plants – "They teach us to relinquish control" – especially this mullein, which add spontaneity to the garden. 2.5m x 20cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

8 *Rudbeckia triloba* Hans likes to blend this stunning coneflower with asters, phloxes and *Chasmanthium latifolium*. Short lived but worth replacing as it's a beautiful performer. 1.5m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.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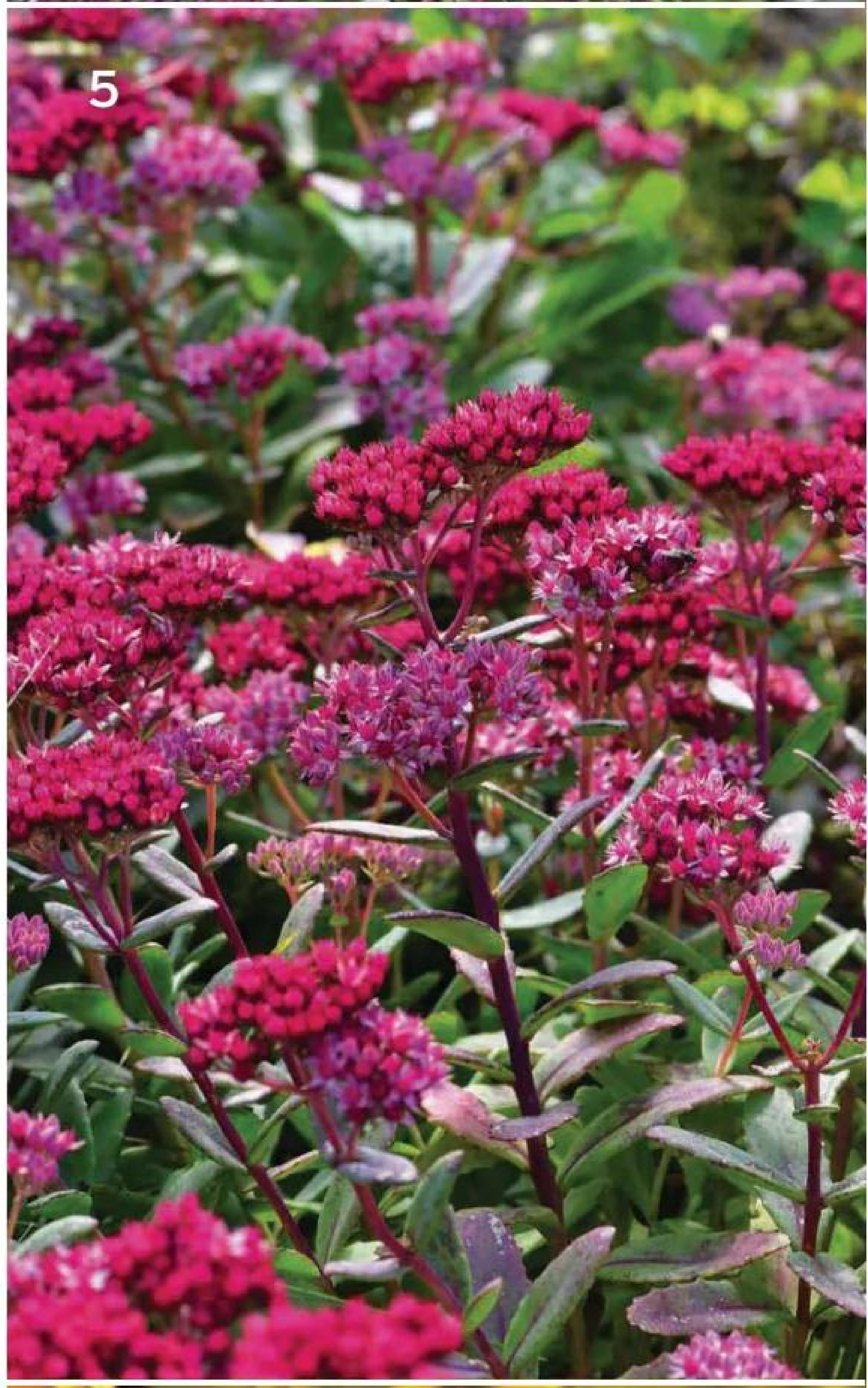
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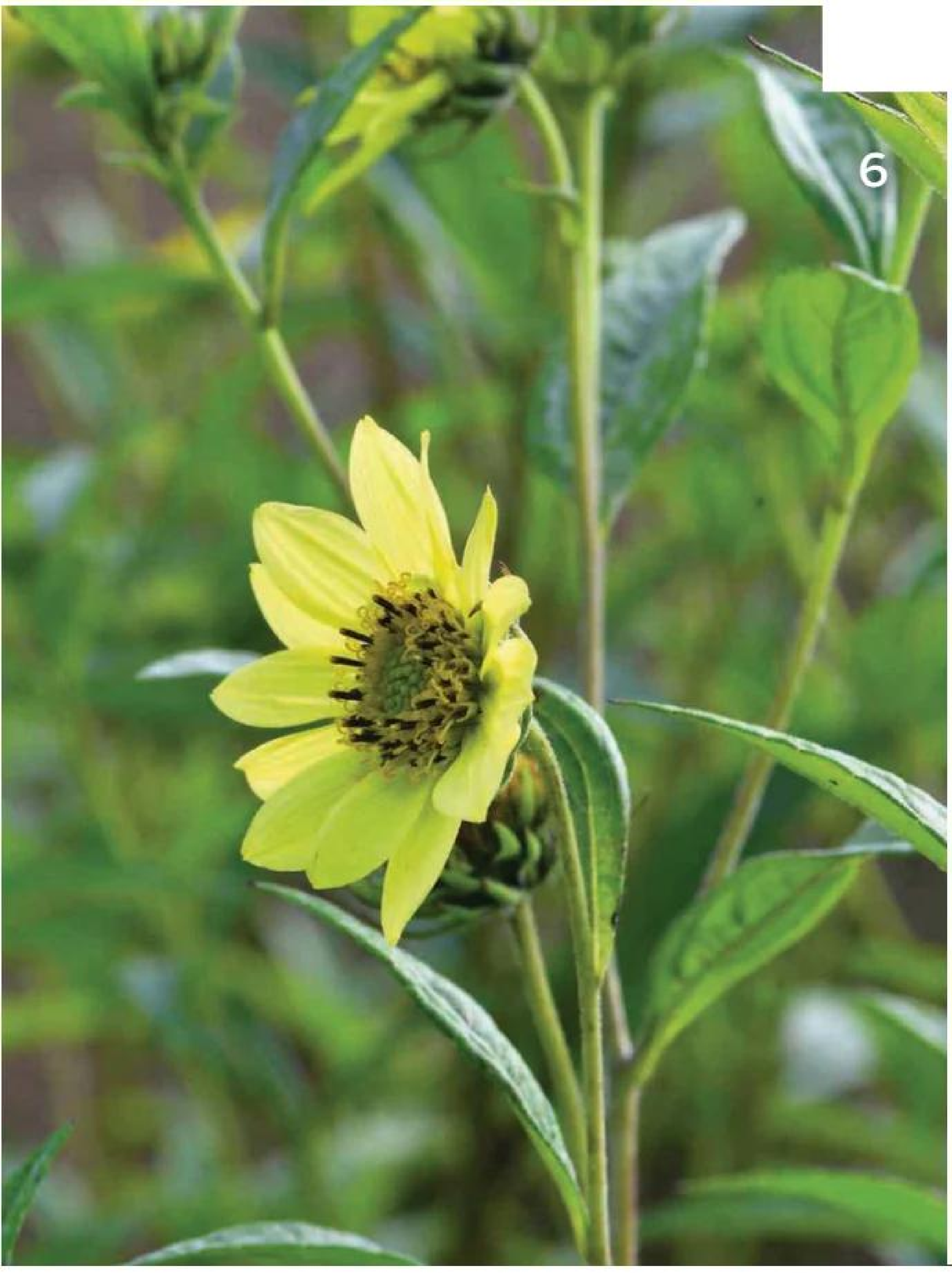
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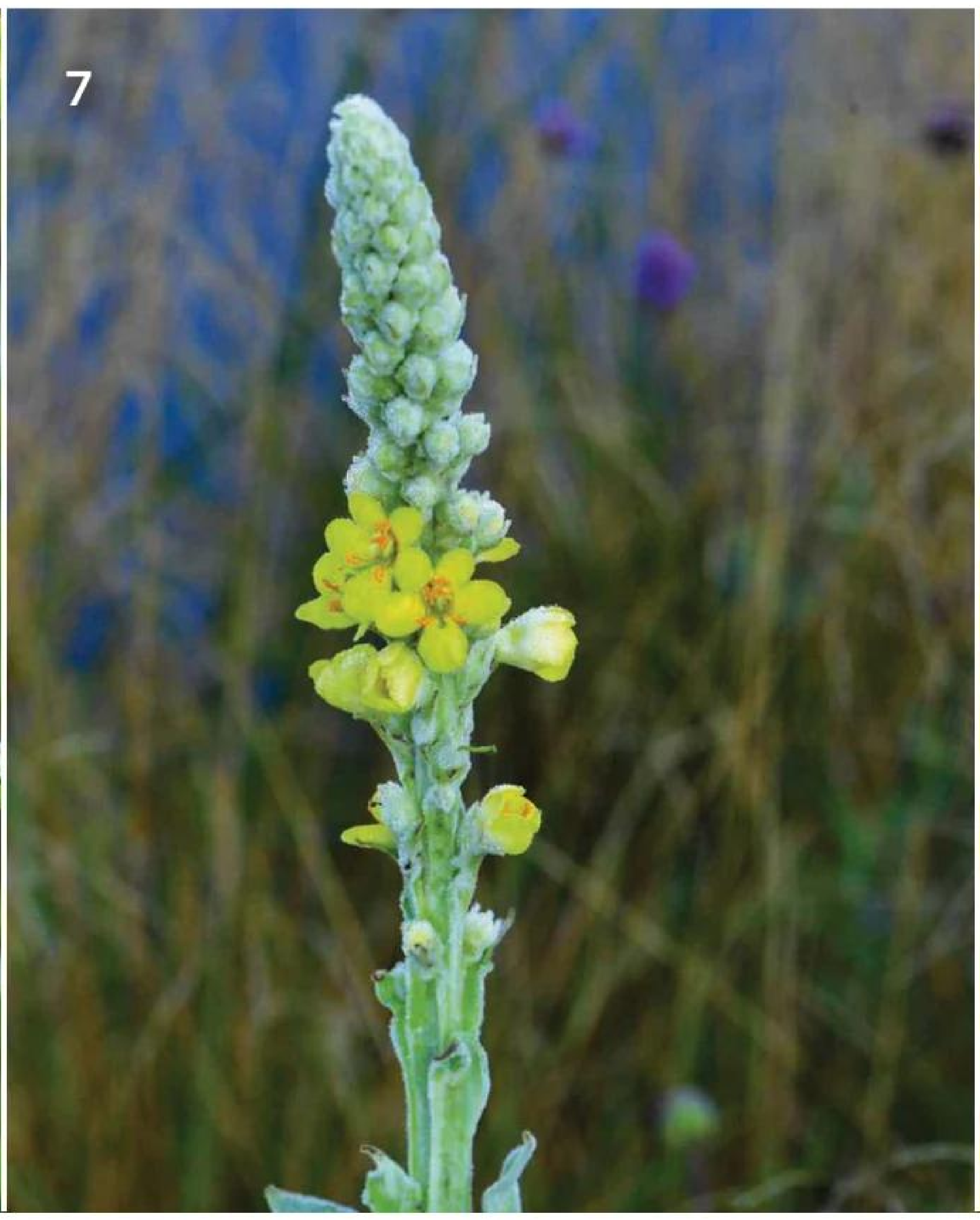
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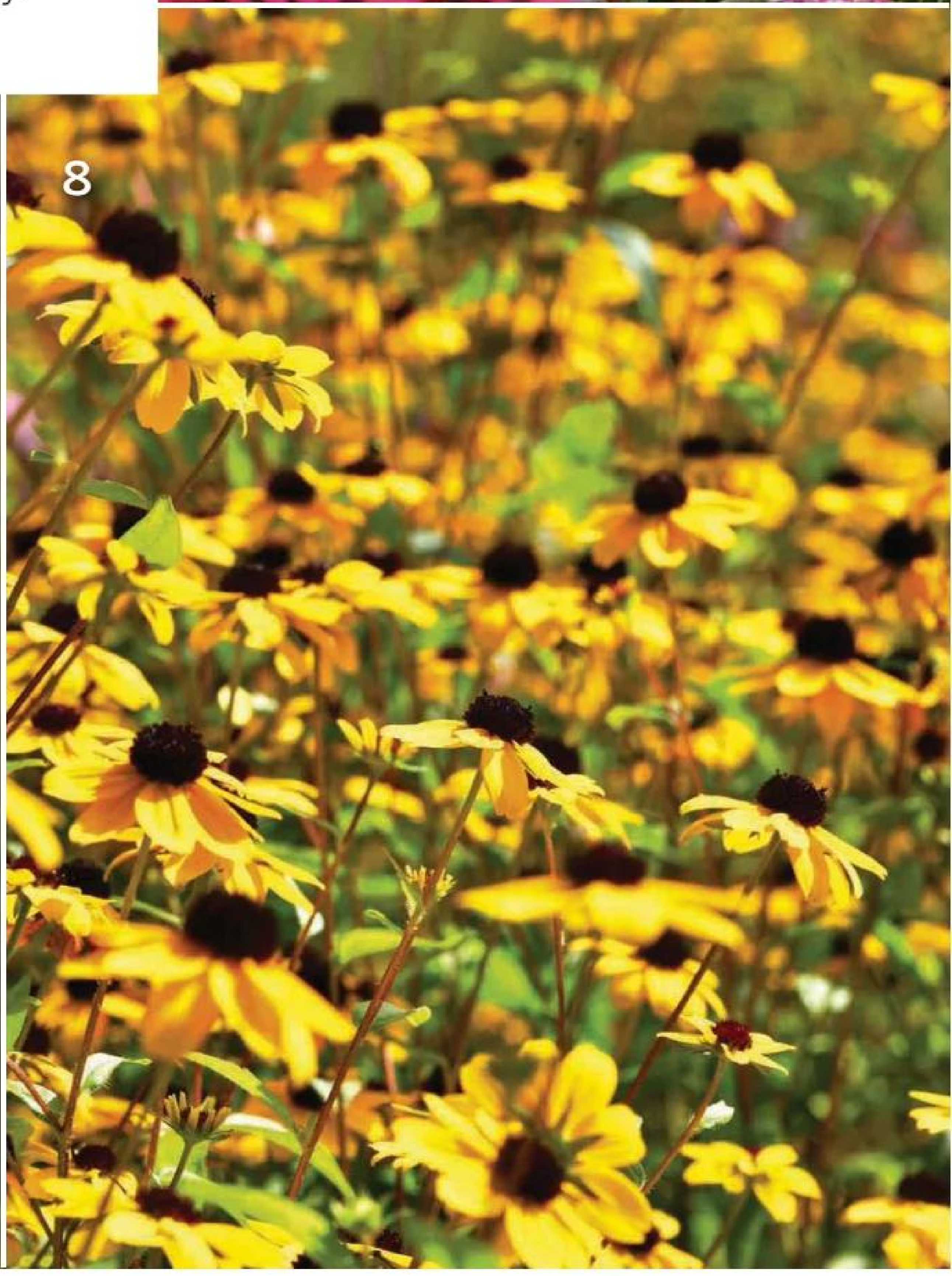
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Hans plants in a matrix based around two grasses: tough semi-evergreen *Sesleria autumnalis;* and *Sporobolus heterolepis*, with airy flowerheads that create silvery clouds in late summer. For structure he uses shrubs and trees, such as *Enkianthus campanulatus*, elder and stag-horn sumach.

▷ wonderfully soothing to the eye. It's a blend of soft, natural shades and organic shapes: clouds, plumes and ripples for the backdrop to abundant flowerheads: echinacea and rudbeckia daisies, architectural acanthus and verbascum, spherical globe thistles and alliums, slender persicarias and veronicastrum spikes, flat-topped eupatoriums and sedums, and hundreds more florescent gems.

"I use two grasses as the basis for the matrix. *Sesleria autumnalis* is tough grass that you can combine with lots of elements. *Sporobolus heterolepis* is not as tough, so you need to be careful with self-seeders, but it's a great base as it creates clouds from August until November."

Twelve years after starting his garden, Hans is still experimenting and expanding his planting. But now there is more ease and freedom. He's no longer copying others – he's creating his own Dutch Wave, adding annuals to the mix such as *Berteroa incana*, which blends with *Verbena bonariensis* to produce the most exquisite billows.

"By walking around and looking at the landscape under different weather conditions, from different angles, from nearby and far away, and above all by taking time and absorbing the impressions, I feel where each plant fits in the community," he says. "All plants take their time to adjust and grow. There is no hurry and no pressure. Nowadays I think a lot about how much I want to orchestrate and how much I want to let go. More and more, I let go. I become more and more modest. Letting go is about being modest." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Hans and Yuxian welcome groups of visitors to their garden. Email hans.gieszen62@gmail.com for more information.

If perennials prefer to stand in
a group, we make small groups.
We allow plants to spread, mostly
through seeds, creating spontaneity

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IRYNA BOBOSHKO

A former lecturer from Ukraine, Iryna currently looks after the flower gardens at Malverleys in Hampshire

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory My grandparents had a big vegetable garden and I used to help them plant potatoes, sow seeds, weed and water. I vividly remember feeling the rich Ukrainian soil between my fingers.

First plant love Sunflowers. I love their tall stalks and bright, cheerful petals. They have a strong cultural significance in Ukraine, symbolising fertility, prosperity and a good harvest.

Who has inspired your career the most? My mother. She instinctively knew gardening would become my passion and suggested I study horticulture.

Who are your horticultural heroes? The Ukrainian farmers and gardeners who have continued to cultivate crops, to plant trees and flowers, and preserve plant species despite the disruption of the war.

Favourite garden Before I came to work at Malverleys, my idea of what made a garden beautiful was very different. I thought a beautiful garden should be planted in a formal style, a monoculture with a lot of trees and shrubs. Malverleys has opened my eyes to new possibilities and shown me a different way to experience nature.

Three most worthwhile tips for every gardener Know your plants – understanding the specific needs of plants you are growing is crucial. Regular care and maintenance is essential if you want a thriving garden. Keep learning and experimenting. Don't be afraid to try new plants, techniques or tools. Gardening challenges can be great opportunities for growth and improvement.

Dream plant destination Georgia. It has a diverse ecosystem and is known for its rich botanical heritage, including a variety of wildflowers, medicinal plants and endemic species.

Favourite planting style A naturalistic planting style resonates with me because it combines beauty, ecological consciousness and a sense of harmony with nature. This style shows the inherent beauty of plants and their interaction in a way that feels deeply connected to the natural world. Naturalistic planting also has a calming effect and can evoke a sense of tranquillity and peace. It offers a retreat from our busy daily lives.

Favourite 'weed' you're happy to have in your garden Daisies (*Bellis perennis*), especially on a lawn. They add a charming, natural look to a lawn, giving it a wildflower appeal.

One easy thing every gardener can do to be more sustainable Choose plants that are native to your region. Native plants are adapted to local conditions, require less water and maintenance, and provide habitat for local wildlife.

In what direction do you see horticulture heading? It seems to be moving towards more sustainable practices, and increased automation, such as maintenance by drones and smart sensors. There's also a growing interest in native plants, biodiversity conservation and organic gardening.

Contact Instagram @boboshko_iryna
malverleys.co.uk

> My heroes are the Ukrainian farmers and gardeners who have continued to cultivate crops and preserve plants despite the disruption of the war

JAPANESE ANEMONES

These elegant blooms are perfect for brightening up late-summer and autumn borders, which makes it easier to forgive their slightly thuggish tendencies

WORDS **MATTHEW REESE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

FACT FILE

What A group of Asian perennial species and hybrids that currently fall within the genus *Anemone*. Known collectively as Japanese anemones (although none actually originate in Japan), they are also known as autumn-flowering anemones and windflowers.

Season From summer to October, depending on species.

Size From 80cm to 1.2m high, depending on species, with a spreading habit.

Conditions Sun or part shade, in any good soil except saturated soils.

Origins Eastern Asia from northeast Pakistan to Taiwan.

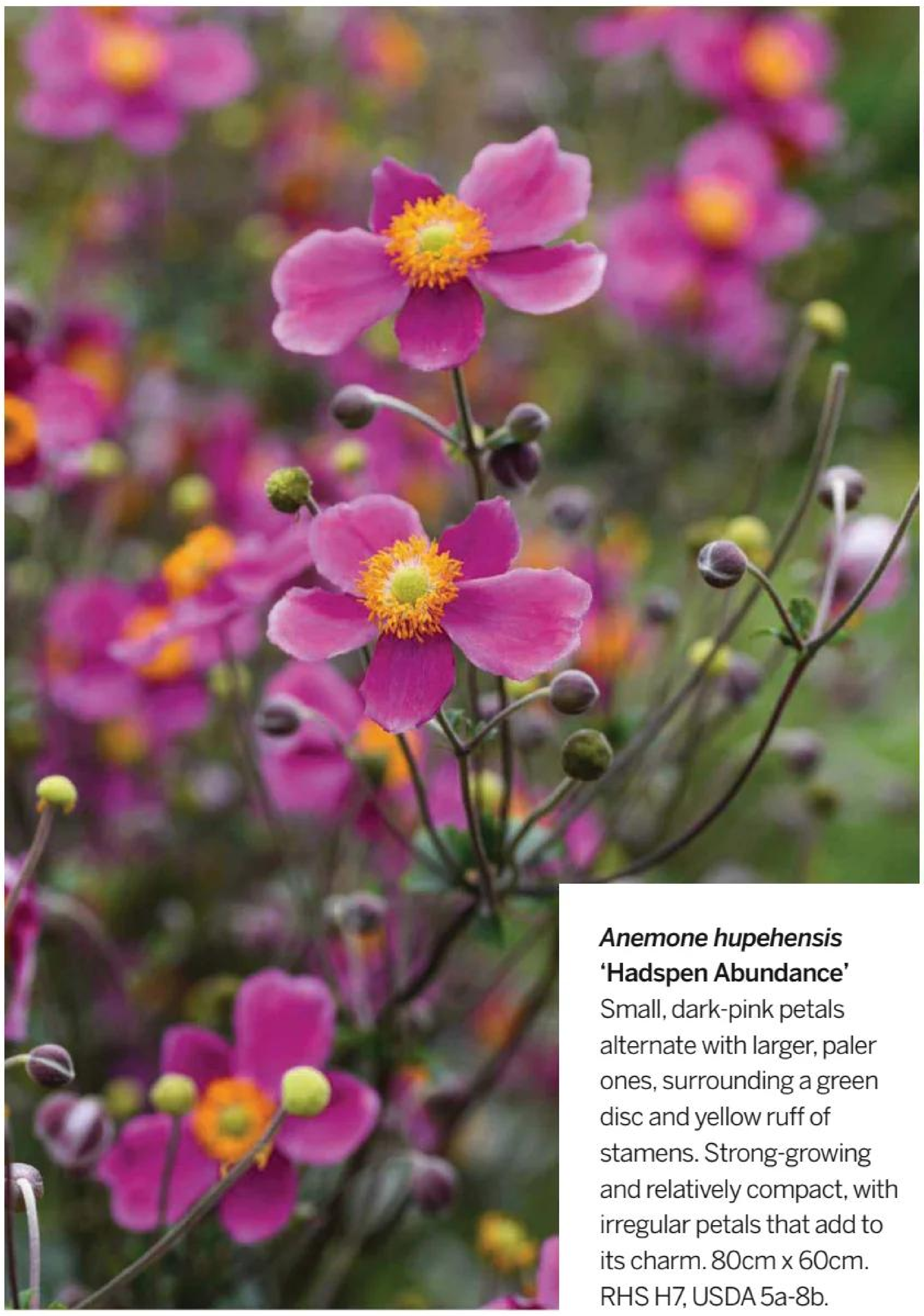
Hardiness Hardy throughout the UK with an RHS hardiness rating of H6-H7 and suitable for gardens in USDA zones 5a to 8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

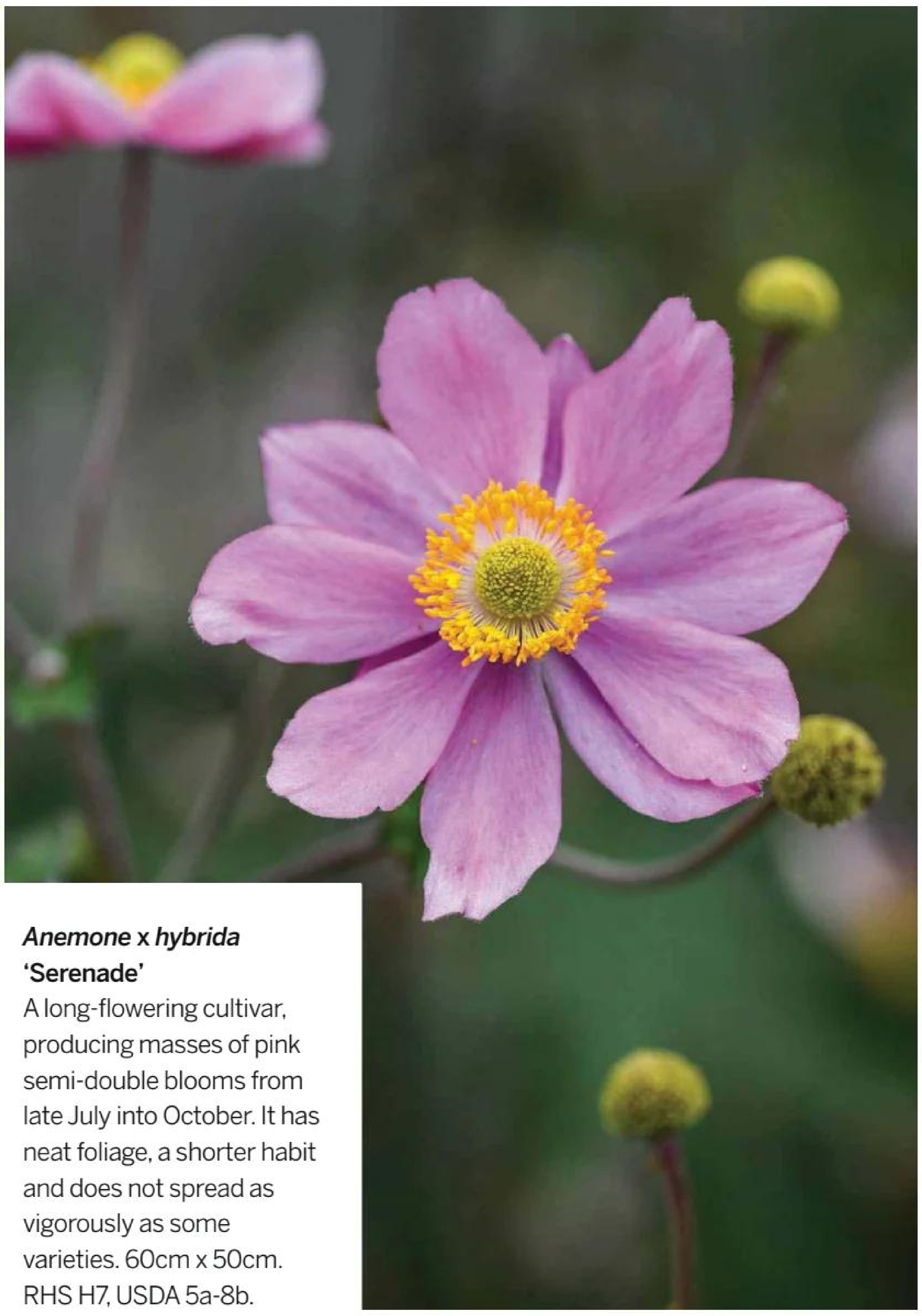
***Anemone* Elfin Swan (= 'Macane017')**

A compact cultivar with large, attractive, palmate leaves. Masses of white flowers with blue backs are produced on sturdy, upright stems. A good clump-former for rich soils. Height and spread: 50cm x 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b†.

***Anemone hupehensis* var. *japonica* 'Pamina'**
Its flowers, though smaller and less numerous than others, are perhaps the prettiest of the group. Produced in loose clusters, the semi-double blooms are a good dark pink. Slow to bulk up but worth the wait. 80cm x 40cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



Anemone hupehensis
'Hadspen Abundance'
Small, dark-pink petals alternate with larger, paler ones, surrounding a green disc and yellow ruff of stamens. Strong-growing and relatively compact, with irregular petals that add to its charm. 80cm x 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



Anemone* x *hybrida
'Serenade'
A long-flowering cultivar, producing masses of pink semi-double blooms from late July into October. It has neat foliage, a shorter habit and does not spread as vigorously as some varieties. 60cm x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

Lighting up the flower garden for two to three months, from July to October, anemones are invaluable perennials. The beautiful, round flowers – single and double forms in shades of white, pink and rose – are produced in open sprays on thin stems that move in the slightest breeze, hence their other common name of windflower. Preceding the blooms, handsome, vine-like foliage is produced in the spring and remains clean and presentable through the summer. This foliage makes a useful anchor around which more ephemeral plants can combine, and is a good foil for early flowers.

Of all the plants that bear the moniker Japanese anemone, *A.* x *hybrida*, a cross between Chinese *A. hupehensis* and the tender Himalayan species *A. vitifolia*, probably accounts for the most glorious hybrids. *A.* x *hybrid* 'Honorine Jobert' with single white flowers is one of the oldest and best cultivars. More recently, the Japanese anemones have been bolstered by the arrival of new and exciting hybrids from Scottish nurserywoman Elizabeth MacGregor, where *A. hupehensis* has been crossed with the summer-flowering *A. rupicola*.

The flowers are inevitably the main draw of Japanese anemones, but perhaps their most enduring feature is the excellent foliage that emerges in late spring and continues to look smart through summer into the autumn months. The more vigorous cultivars make good groundcover plants when used en masse and will make a solid carpet of leaves. In a woodland setting they can be used to take over from early dryads such as snowdrops or squill. *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Robustissima' is a good example of a species that has the invasive capacity to slowly take possession of shady borders and will even find its way right up to the trunks of established trees.

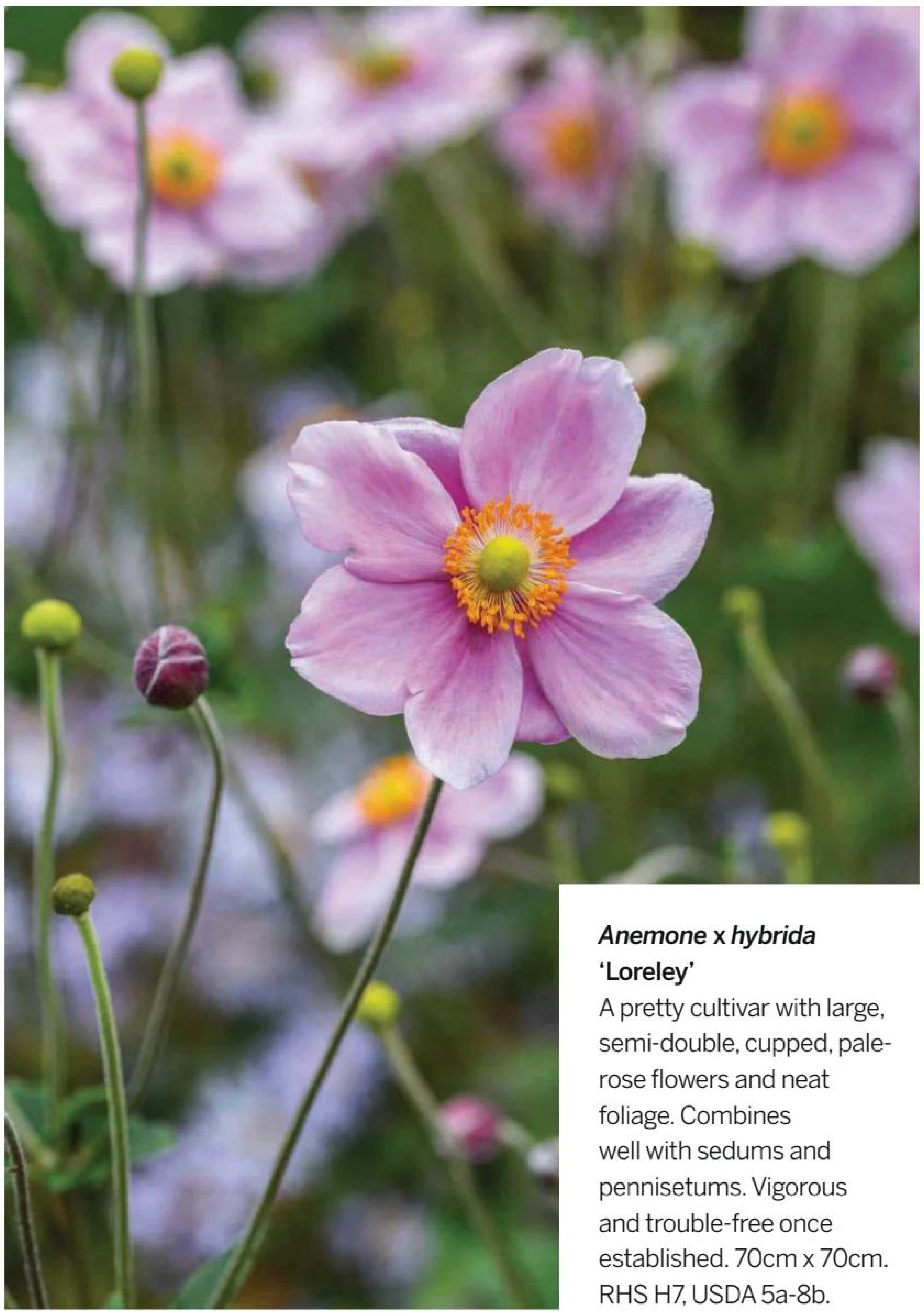
In the flower garden, these vigorous cultivars should be kept away from plantings where they might become difficult to control and tangle with more sensitive plants. Although all anemones will slowly spread, some, such as *A. hupehensis* var. *japonica* 'Pamina' and the Swan Series, are far less aggressive. These make excellent plants for the flower border, where tidy foliage is so important. The large leaves contrast well with grassy-leaved plants such as crocosmias and kniphofias, and can also be used to the gardener's advantage at the front of the border to disguise less attractive foliage. *Allium cristophii* is a good partner. The steadfast anemone leaves hide the dying yellow foliage of the allium and provide a lush backdrop for the starry purple flowers.

Generally, the flowers of anemones are presented in loose clusters well above the foliage, in a slightly haphazard way that gives them an attractive, naturalistic look and means they can be massed without worry of overdoing it. Pink forms, such as *A. hupehensis* 'Hadspen Abundance', are particularly lovely when seen against a backdrop of the powder-blue flowers of

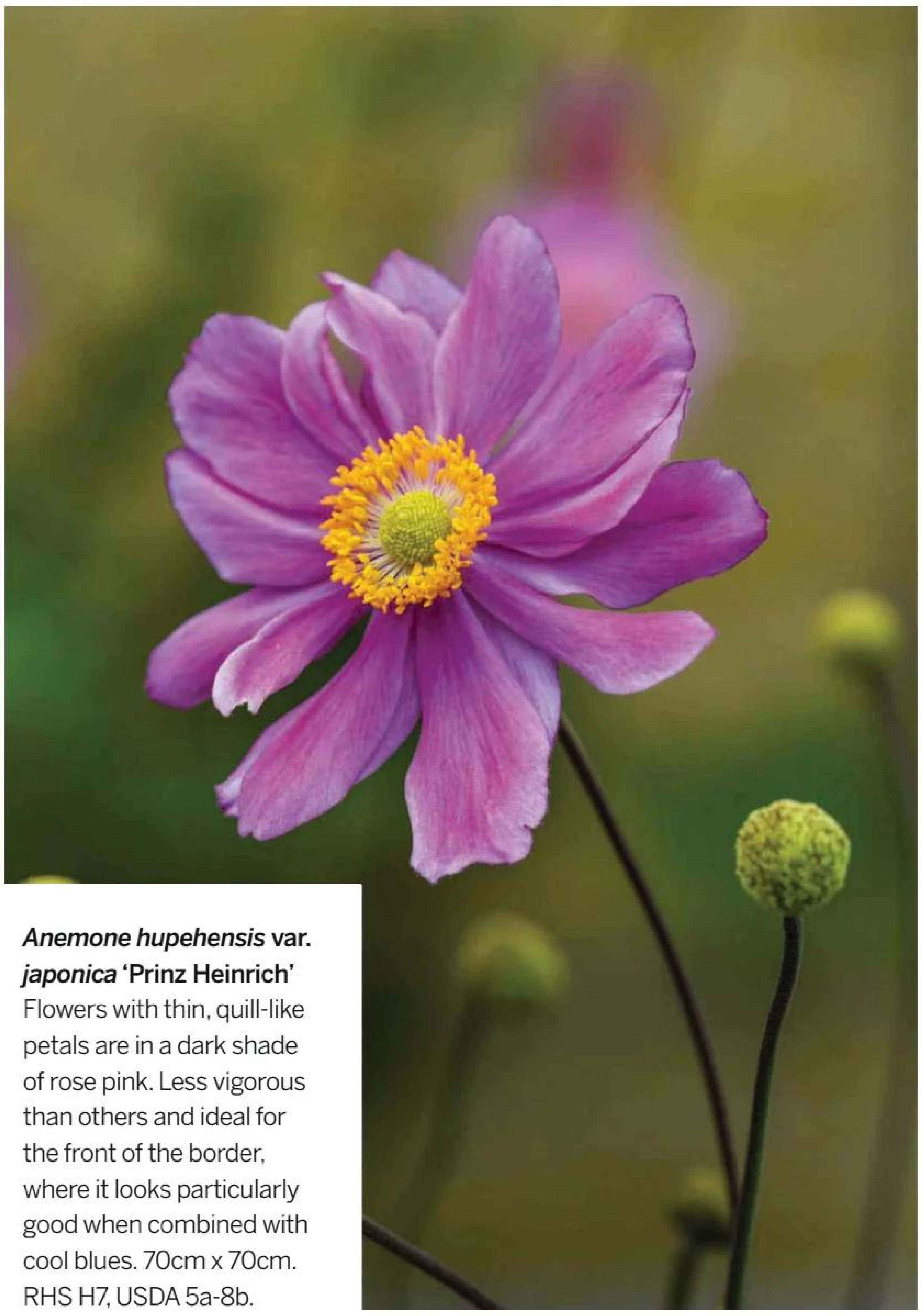
> The beautiful, round flowers are produced in open sprays on thin stems that move in the slightest breeze

To continue turn to page 51 ▷

***Anemone* Blushing Swan (= 'Macane002')**
A new cultivar with soft-pink flowers from Elizabeth MacGregor's Swan Series. Clump-forming and early flowering, it has an upright habit. It needs a good well-drained soil with lots of moisture. 60cm x 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.



***Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Loreley'**
A pretty cultivar with large, semi-double, cupped, pale-rose flowers and neat foliage. Combines well with sedums and pennisetums. Vigorous and trouble-free once established. 70cm x 70cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



***Anemone hupehensis* var. *japonica* 'Prinz Heinrich'**
Flowers with thin, quill-like petals are in a dark shade of rose pink. Less vigorous than others and ideal for the front of the border, where it looks particularly good when combined with cool blues. 70cm x 70cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

How to grow Japanese anemones

- **Japanese anemones are relatively easy to cultivate**. They can be planted at any time of the year, provided they are nurtured during dry periods while establishing. Autumn is best as it will provide the anemones with the opportunity to establish root growth while the soil is still warm. This will help plants to cope should the spring and early summer be on the dry side.

- **They prefer moist, free-draining, alkaline soils**, but will thrive in most conditions (except very wet soils) and once established can be hard to remove.

- **Before planting, prepare the ground well** with garden compost dug and mixed into the existing soil. Be sure to consolidate the soil firmly as they do not like to sit in wet, spongy soils, particularly during the cold winter months.

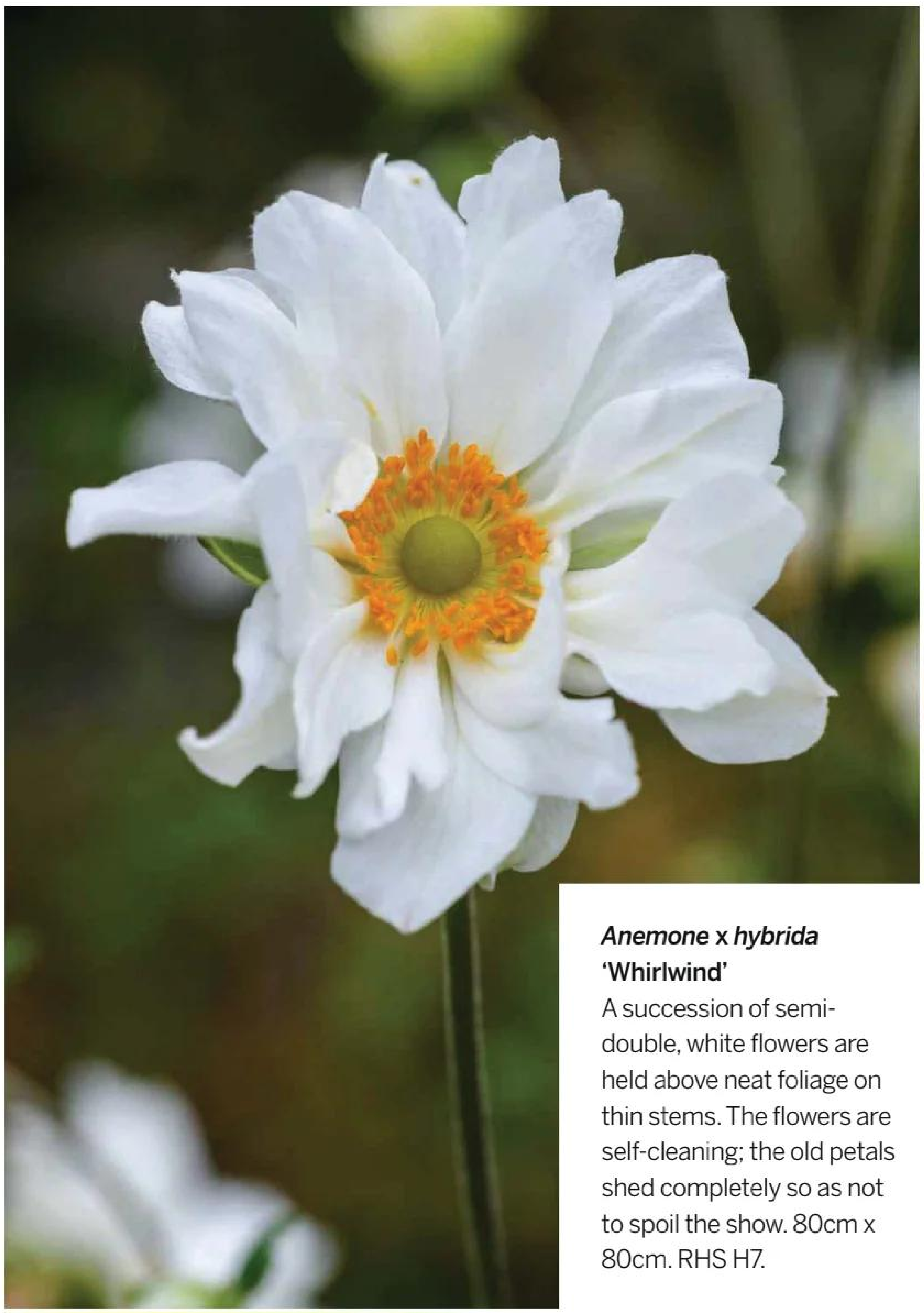
- **All do well in light to medium shade or full sun,** provided they have adequate moisture. In dim light, compact cultivars such as *A.* x *hybrida* 'Serenade' are best, as taller forms can be prone to falling over.

- **Anemones can take time to establish,** but once they have a foothold, they'll form strong clumps with slowly spreading rhizomes. They're not speedy colonisers, but in time they can out-compete more submissive perennials. This sturdy habit can be a useful asset in places where a tough, low-maintenance groundcover is called for.

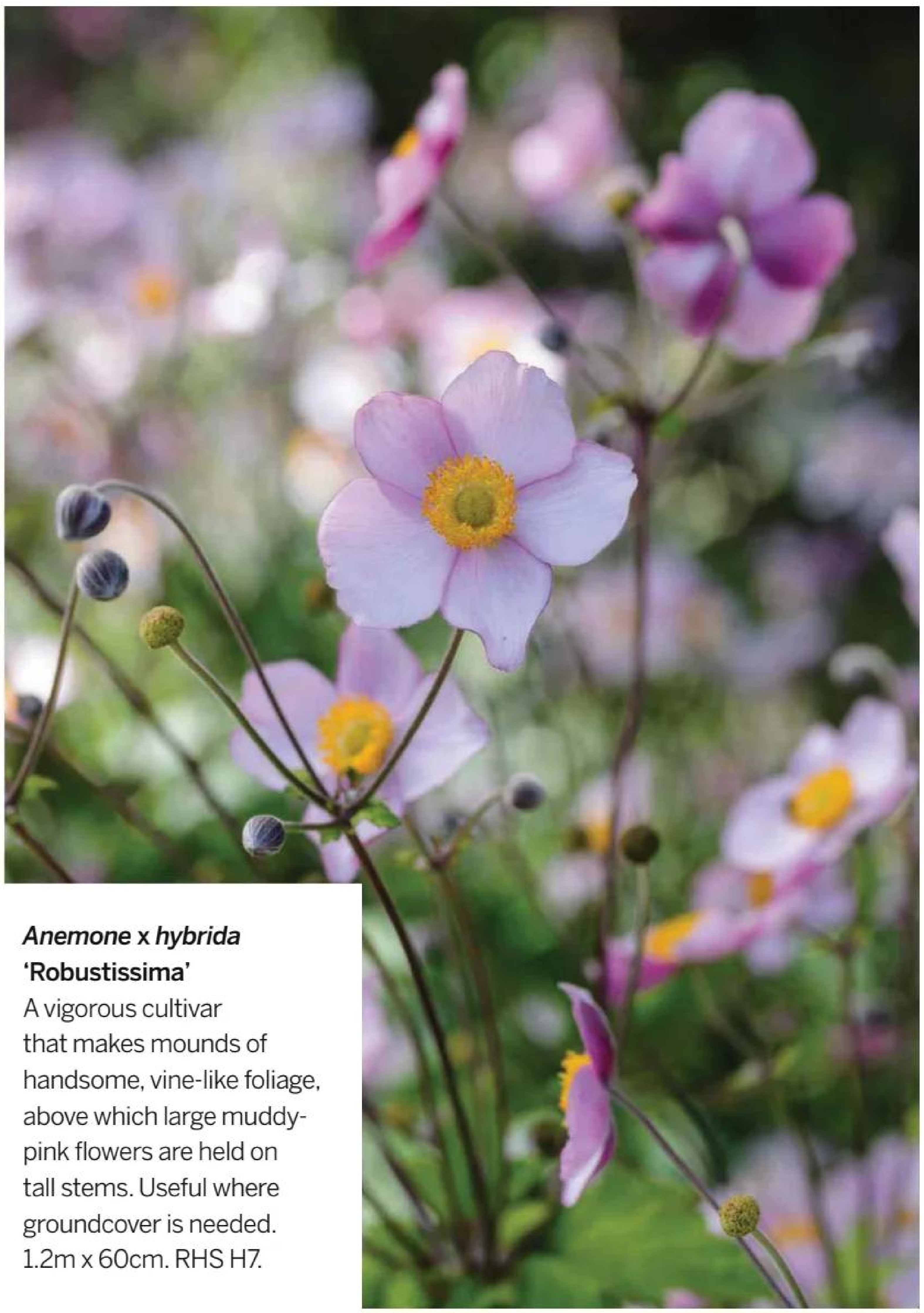
- **They require little attention until the winter,** when they need to be cut right back to the ground. Taller cultivars can be prone to flopping (particularly in shade). The stems are generally quite strong. The point of weakness is quite close to the ground, so they require only short canes and a ring of twine taking in the outer stems to keep them upright.

- **Increase by division in autumn,** and establish the splits in pots before replanting in the garden, otherwise plants will sulk. Commercially, they are often raised from root cuttings in pots. Seed is an option and is best sown as soon as it is ripe on to a loam-based seed compost. Cover with sharp grit to hold down the fluffy seed, and place in a cold frame.

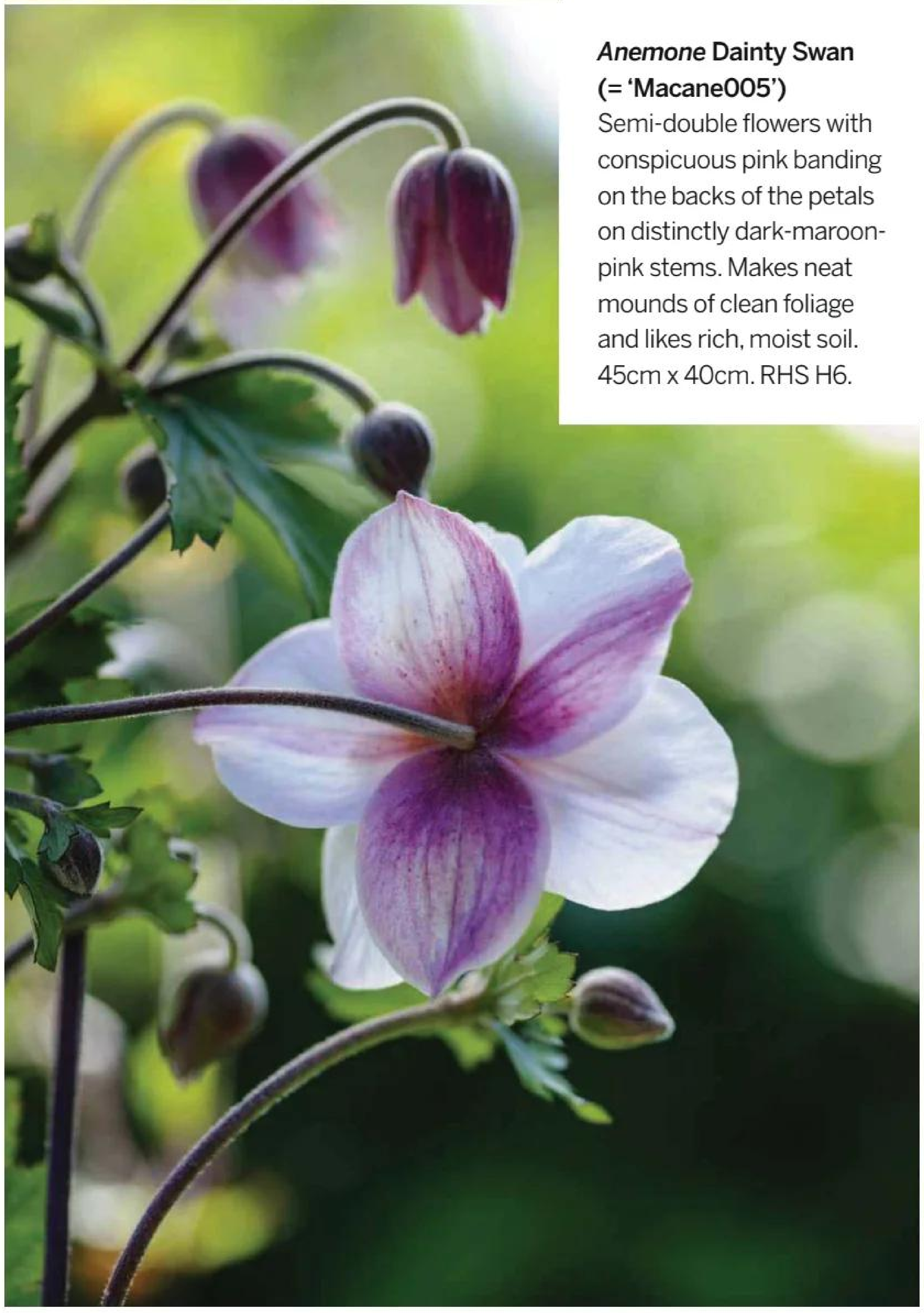
- **Generally, anemones suffer little from pests and diseases.** Stem rot can cause sporadic damage and infected material should be removed and burned, but it rarely subdues the plant completely. Nematodes can also be an issue. The key to success seems to be good garden soil and leave the plants to their own devices.



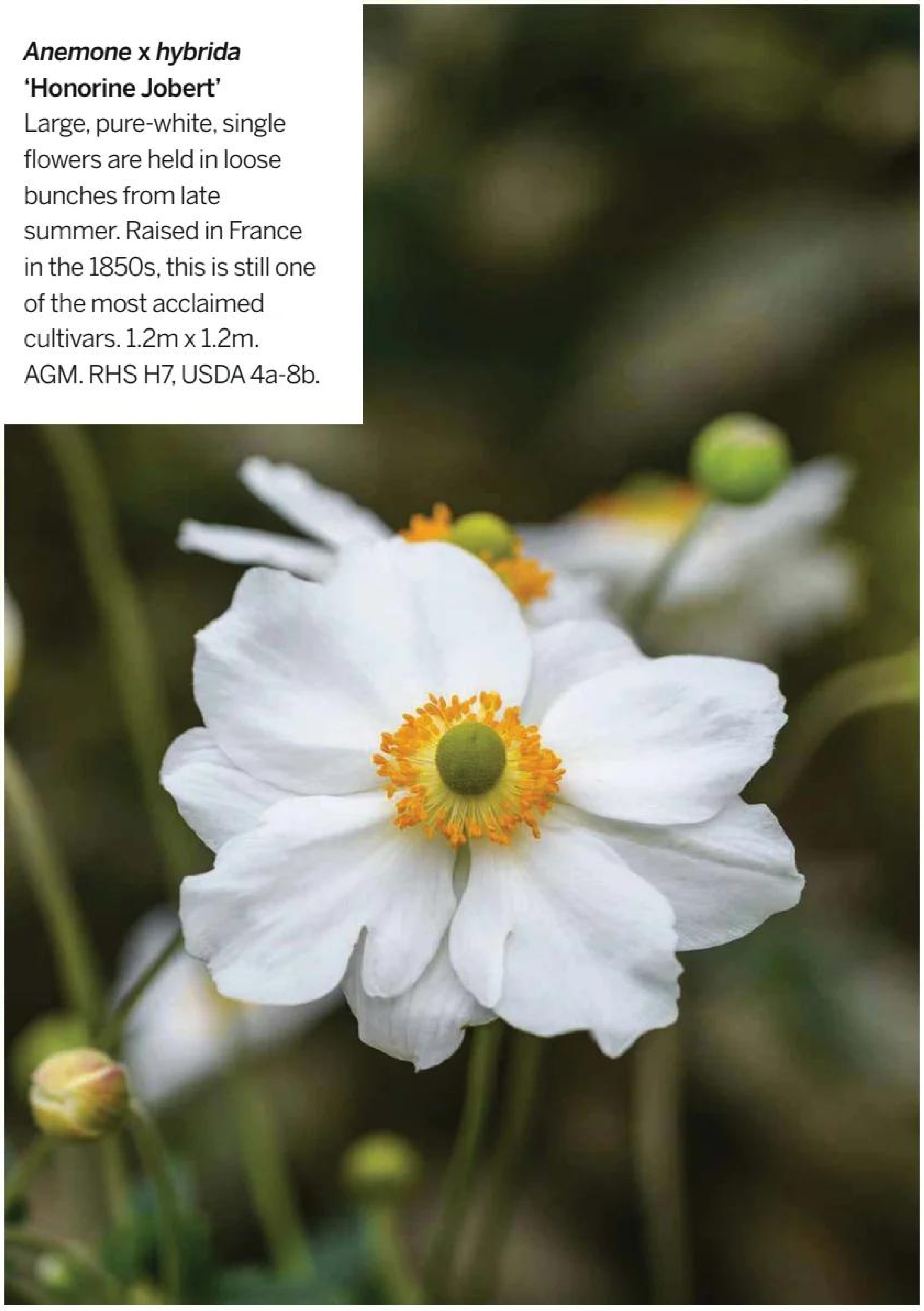
Anemone* x *hybrida
'Whirlwind'
A succession of semi-double, white flowers are held above neat foliage on thin stems. The flowers are self-cleaning; the old petals shed completely so as not to spoil the show. 80cm x 80cm. RHS H7.



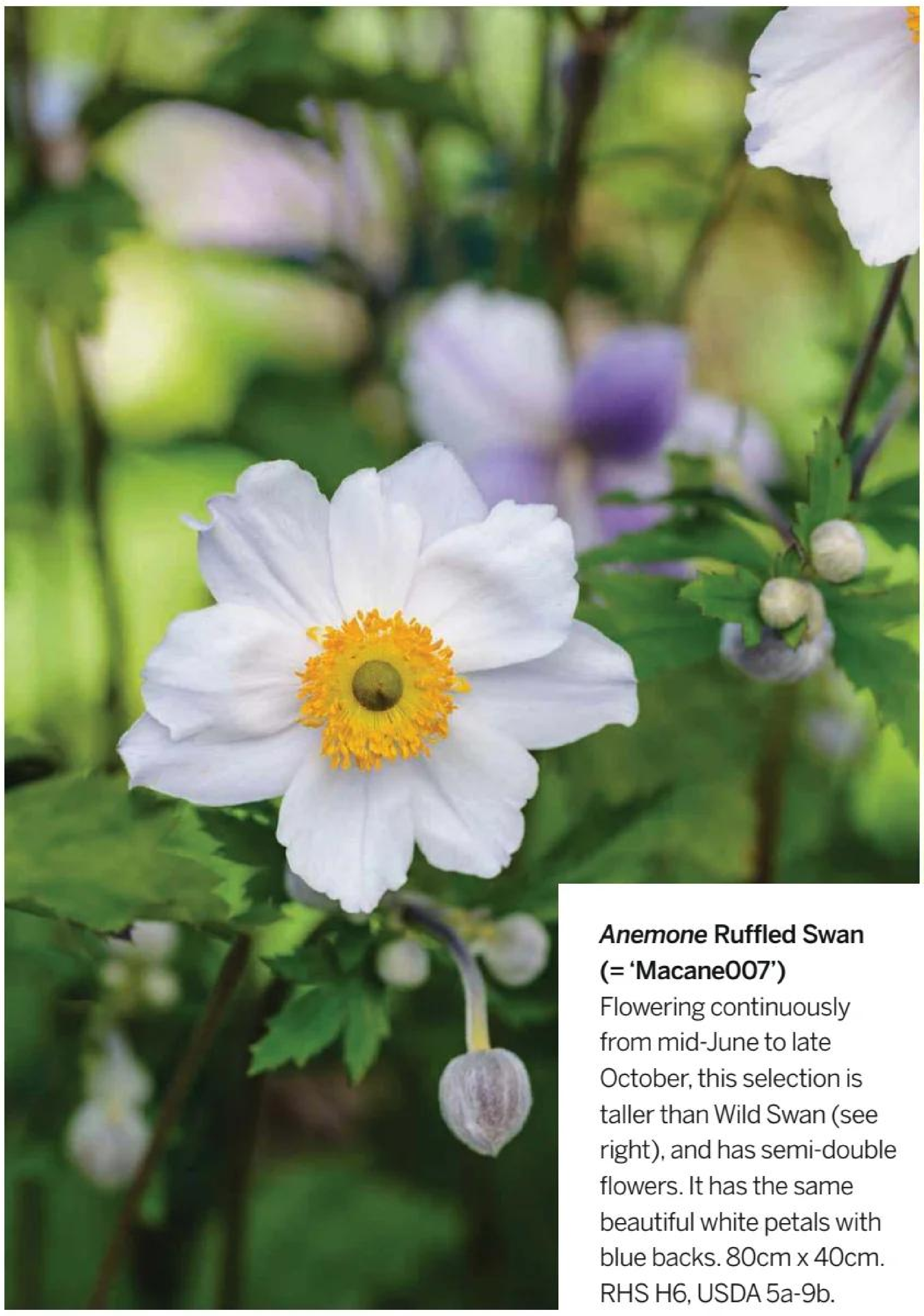
Anemone* x *hybrida
'Robustissima'
A vigorous cultivar that makes mounds of handsome, vine-like foliage, above which large muddy-pink flowers are held on tall stems. Useful where groundcover is needed. 1.2m x 60cm. RHS H7.



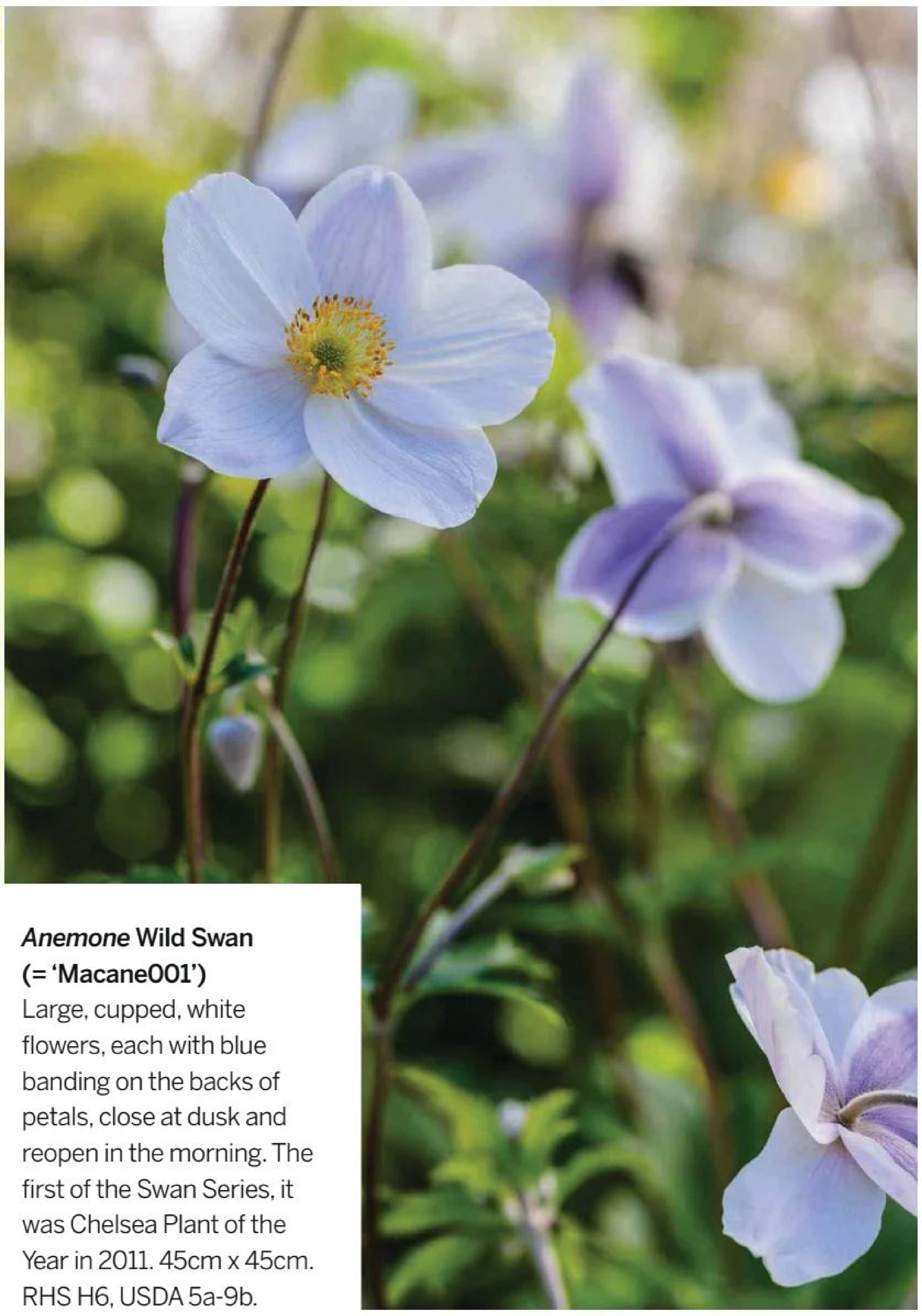
***Anemone* Dainty Swan**
(= 'Macane005')
Semi-double flowers with conspicuous pink banding on the backs of the petals on distinctly dark-maroon-pink stems. Makes neat mounds of clean foliage and likes rich, moist soil. 45cm x 40cm. RHS H6.



Anemone* x *hybrida
'Honorine Jobert'
Large, pure-white, single flowers are held in loose bunches from late summer. Raised in France in the 1850s, this is still one of the most acclaimed cultivars. 1.2m x 1.2m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.



Anemone Ruffled Swan (= 'Macane007')
Flowering continuously from mid-June to late October, this selection is taller than Wild Swan (see right), and has semi-double flowers. It has the same beautiful white petals with blue backs. 80cm x 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.



Anemone Wild Swan (= 'Macane001')
Large, cupped, white flowers, each with blue banding on the backs of petals, close at dusk and reopen in the morning. The first of the Swan Series, it was Chelsea Plant of the Year in 2011. 45cm x 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

MANY THANKS TO MALVERLEYS GARDEN IN HAMPSHIRE WHERE MANY OF THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN

> *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' is still one of the nicest and worthy of a place in any border

▷ aster *Symphyotrichum* 'Little Carlow' or pink sedum *Hylotelephium* 'Matrona' in front. They are also a valuable source of clean white late in the season, when clean white is a rare commodity. All forms are excellent, and it's quite something that the old cultivar *A.* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert', discovered in Verdun, France, in 1858, is still one of the nicest, worthy of a place in any border. The similar *A.* x *hybrida* 'Andrea Atkinson' is a little taller, and, when used in combination with late yellow daisies and blue *Salvia uliginosa*, makes a lovely autumnal vignette.

Anemone is a diverse genus of approximately 100 species of tuberous and fibrous-rooted perennials, mostly from the northern hemisphere, and in the family Ranunculaceae. Horticulturally, the genus can be split into three groups based on their root stalks and growth habit, but here, we have been primarily concerned with the so-called Japanese anemones, which have a fibrous root habit. In fact, the common name given to the group is misleading, and refers to a mixed-up group of closely related species – none of which actually originate from Japan.

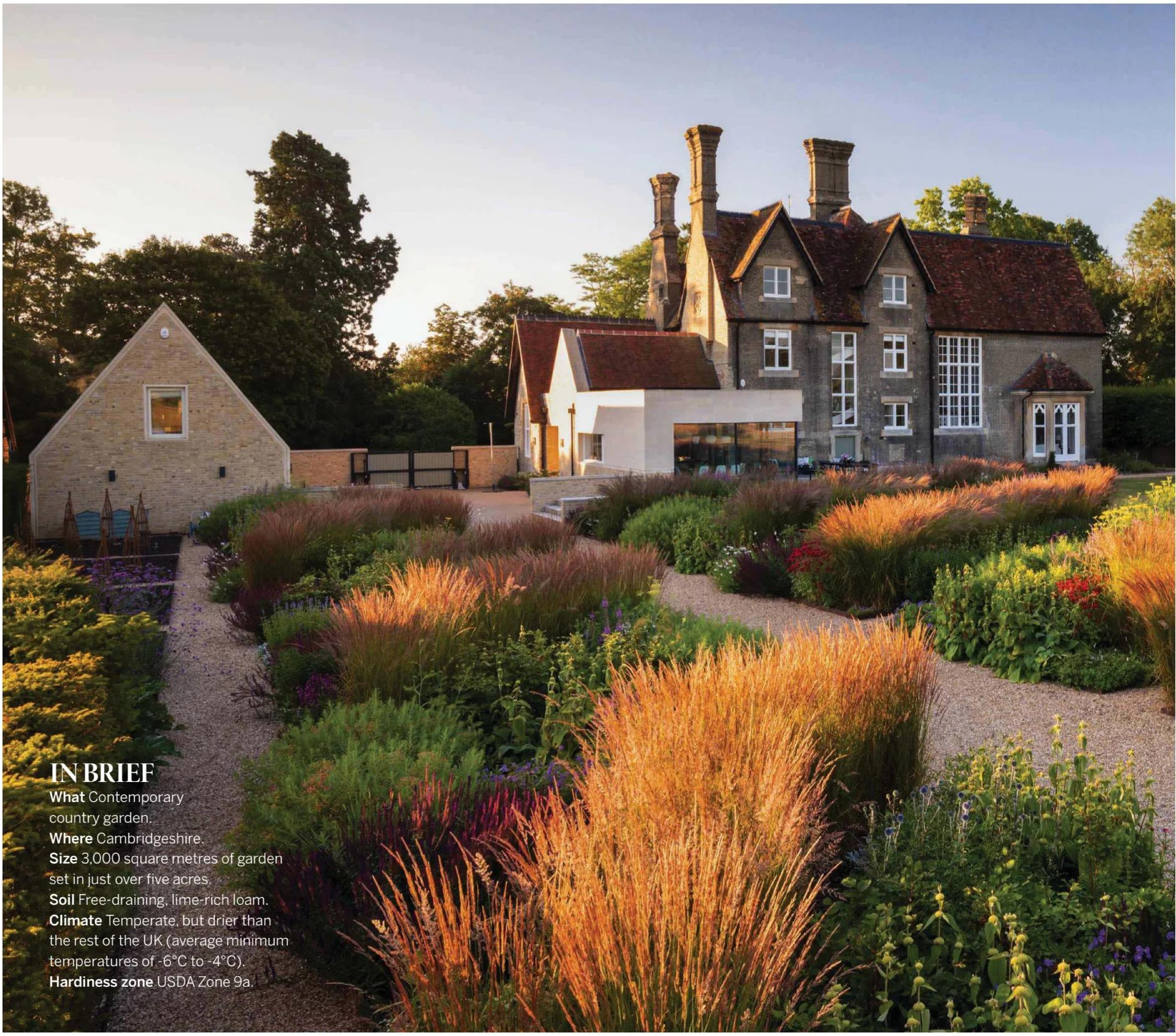
In 1784, the Swedish botanist Carl Thunberg found a semi-double-flowered anemone in Japan that he mistook for a herbaceous clematis. He also had no way of knowing that it was actually native to China and had simply escaped from Japanese gardens and naturalised. He called it *Atragene japonica*. When it was introduced to Europe (probably by Philipp Franz von Siebold in 1830) it was recognised as an anemone but still assumed to be Japanese. From this misunderstanding came the common name of 'Japanese anemone', which has stuck – not just for that original double flower (now confusingly called *Anemone hupehensis* var. *japonica*, even though it's from China), but for other Asian species, none of which have ever been discovered in the wild in Japan.

According to many botanists, they are probably not even anemones, but belong instead in the genus *Eriocapitella*. Perhaps it's time we started to call them by their alternative name of windflowers. □

Matthew Reese is head gardener at Malverleys garden.

Where to see and buy

- **Ballyrobert Gardens** 154 Ballyrobert Road, Ballyclare, Co. Antrim BT39 9RT. Tel 028 9344 0101, ballyrobertgardens.com
- **Beth Chatto's Plants & Gardens** Clacton Road, Elmstead Market, Elmstead, Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB. Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk
- **Elizabeth MacGregor Nursery** Ellenbank, Tongland Road, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Galloway DG6 4UU. Tel 01557 330620, elizabethmacgregornursery.co.uk



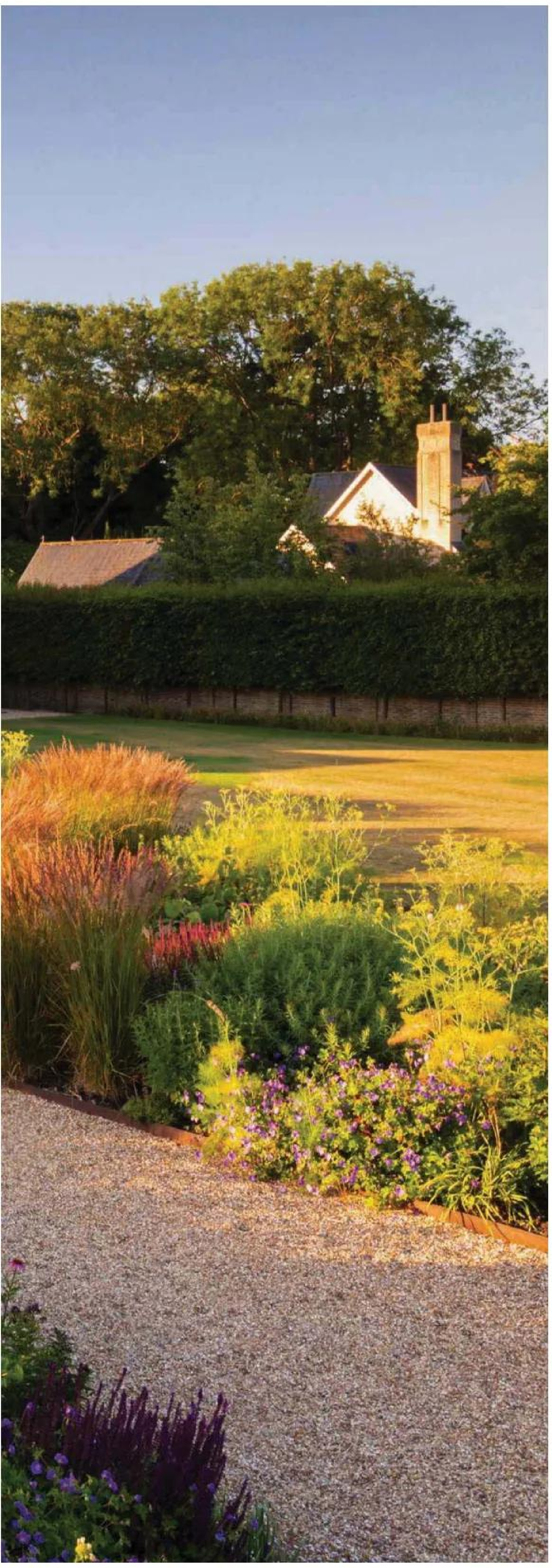
IN BRIEF

What Contemporary country garden.
Where Cambridgeshire.
Size 3,000 square metres of garden set in just over five acres.
Soil Free-draining, lime-rich loam.
Climate Temperate, but drier than the rest of the UK (average minimum temperatures of -6°C to -4°C).
Hardiness zone USDA Zone 9a.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Inspired by the historic house and setting at Park House in Cambridgeshire, landscape architect Robert Myers has woven together traditional and contemporary design elements to create a haven for people, plants and wildlife

WORDS ZIA ALLAWAY PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM



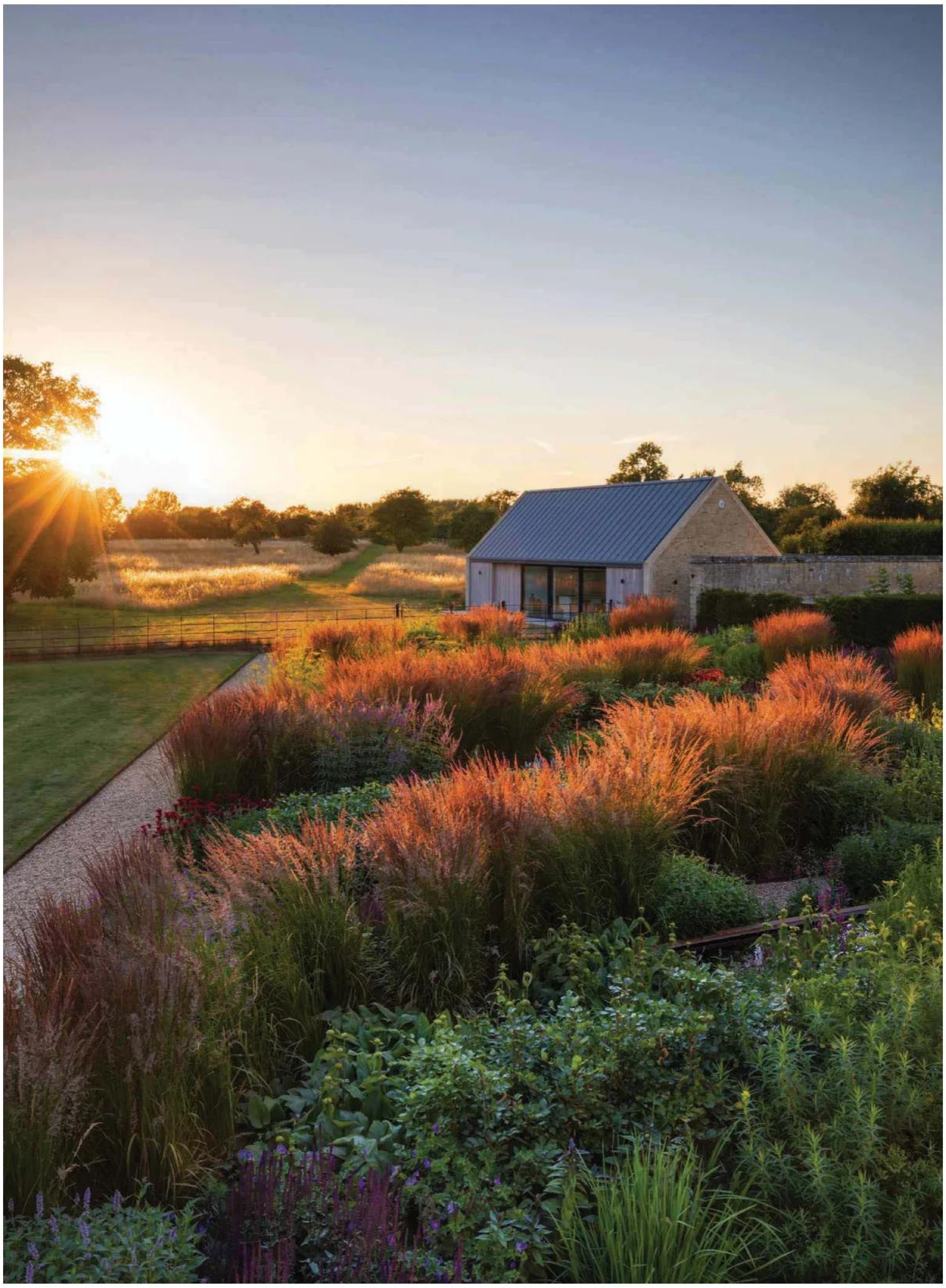
Above left Linking the house to the existing meadow, waves of feather reed grasses (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster') are lit up like beacons in the low evening sun.

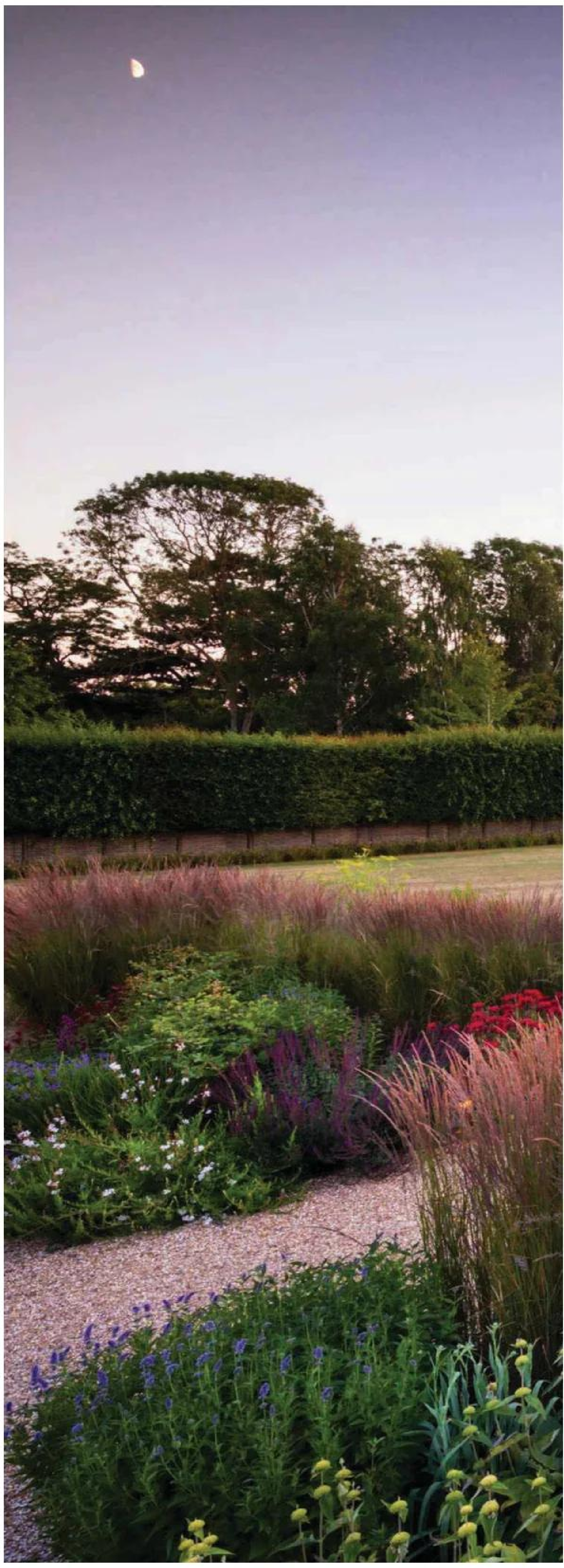
Above right Robert designed the garden to be seen from a raised patio adjoining the new kitchen extension, offering views over the flowers and grasses to the meadow and trees beyond. The limestone paving and sliding glass doors create a seamless transition from the house to the garden.

When tasked with upgrading the landscape surrounding Park House near Cambridge, Robert Myers' aims were to create a flower-filled contemporary garden that supported the local wildlife, while staying true to the historic setting. But he could not have foreseen that his design would have an additional benefit for owners, Sharon and David Smith, who developed a new-found passion for plants and love of nature while caring for their restored garden during the Covid lockdowns.

The couple's Grade II-listed house was built in 1854 in the Gothic Revival style, and was originally surrounded by formal gardens that led on to an orchard and extensive parkland, some of which has now been sold off. Robert's brief was to create a new garden that would be sympathetic to the historic house, while offering David, Sharon and their three children spaces to relax, entertain and play. "We also worked closely with architects Cowper Griffiths to integrate the gardens with the new kitchen extension and pool house they had designed," explains Robert.

Taking his cue from the bold glass-fronted extension, which blends a contemporary structure with the period architecture, Robert's design of the outdoor space is also a marriage of the ▷





Above Tall plantings of *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' alternate with perennials, including *Phlomis russeliana*, *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' and *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat'). The diagonal pathway that runs through the garden and out into the meadow beyond follows the contours of a historic route that Robert discovered when researching 19th-century maps of the landscape.

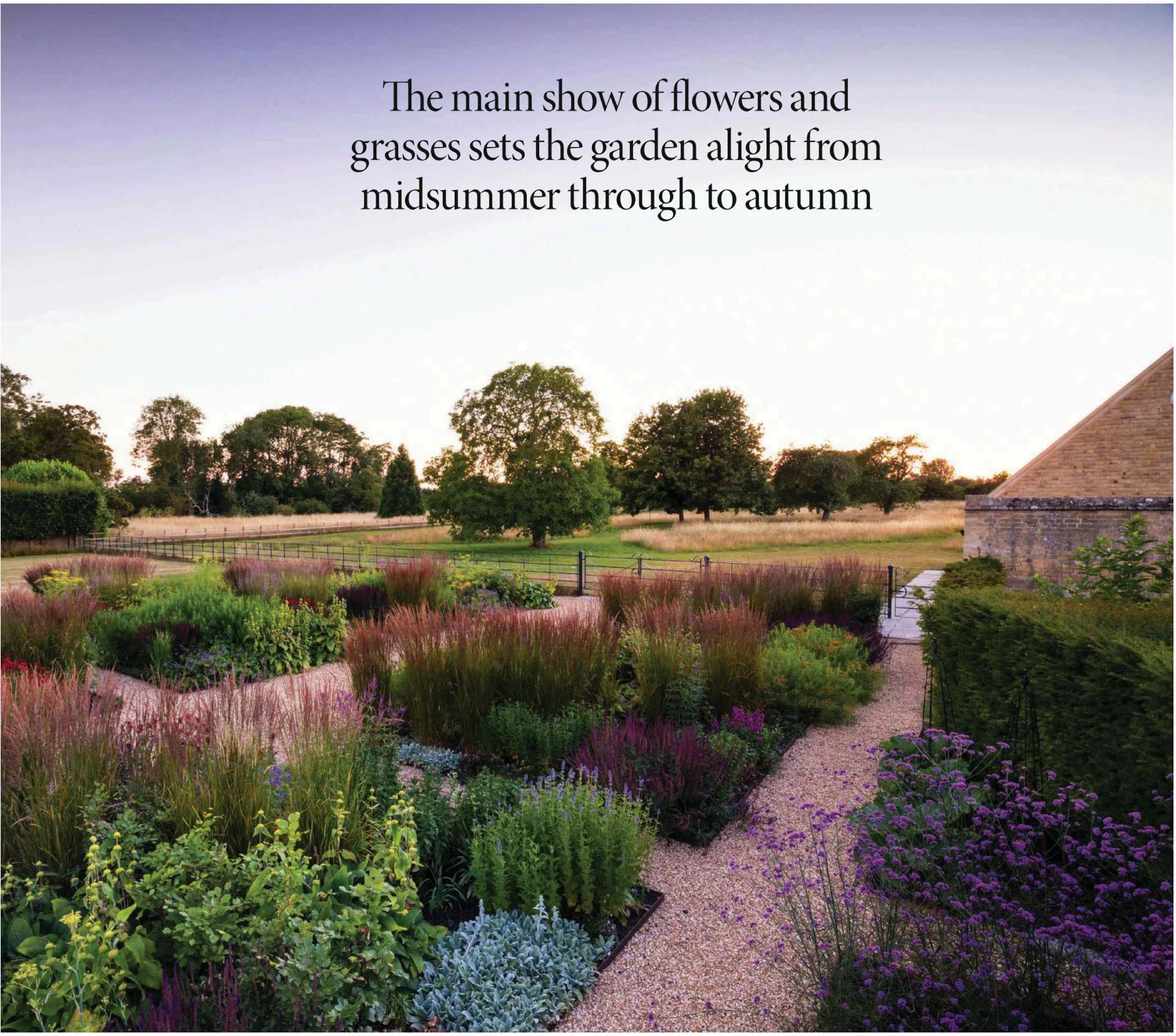
▷ old and the new. "When we first arrived on site, the lawn at the back of the house looked more like a field than a garden, and I wondered if the original designs could offer us any inspiration. I discovered Ordinance Survey maps of the property dating back to the late 19th century, which showed a diagonal path running from the house, through the formal gardens to the park beyond, and decided to reference this historic route in the new design."

The diagonal path forms the main axis through the garden and steps now link it to an elevated paved terrace on the same level as the kitchen. Warmed by the evening sun, this west-facing terrace provides space for dining outside, offering views over a series of rectangular beds filled with perennial flowers and grasses and the meadow beyond.

The planting beds are sandwiched between the diagonal pathway and another straight path in front of the kitchen. These provide alternative routes to the wildflower meadow and new pool and pool house. "The beds are also traversed by narrow gravel paths that immerse you in the planting as you travel along them, while providing glimpses of the Corten-steel water tanks, which we designed to reflect the sky and scudding clouds above," says Robert.

An expanse of lawn on the south side of the garden references the original historic design and offers long, uninterrupted views from the house over the whole site, while

The main show of flowers and grasses sets the garden alight from midsummer through to autumn



the walled garden surrounding the pool includes more perennials and grasses. A new greenhouse and informal kitchen garden, where the couple grow their own soft fruit and vegetables, lies beyond the pool house on the north side.

Robert has combined the ornamental grasses *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' and *Sesleria autumnalis* with a tapestry of pollen-rich perennials, including *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Fascination', *Agastache* 'Blue Boa', *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' and *Penstemon* 'Raven', which draw in wildlife and increase biodiversity in the garden. "The grasses also create a visual link to the wildflower meadow, which was already well established when we arrived," he adds. The chalky soil was augmented with some new topsoil but the plants have been carefully selected to thrive in the free-draining conditions, and Sharon says that now they are established, she rarely has to water them, even during the dry summers that are typical in this part of the country.

"In spring, the beds are flooded with tulips," says Robert. "And by May, there is a succession of alliums, euphorbias and geraniums, before the main show of flowers and grasses sets the garden alight from midsummer through to autumn." The planting at this time of year almost masks the reflective water tanks, but as the seasons turn and the plants die down, they ▷

Above The tapestry of planting Robert has used in front of the house combines the custard-yellow flowers of *Phlomis russeliana*, violet *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna', purple-blue *Agastache* 'Blue Boa', the silvery foliage of *Stachys byzantina* 'Silver Carpet' and dots of lilac-purple *Verbena bonariensis*, which Sharon added to augment Robert's original list.

We were never avid gardeners before, but being in touch with nature during the lockdowns was very relaxing

Just add water

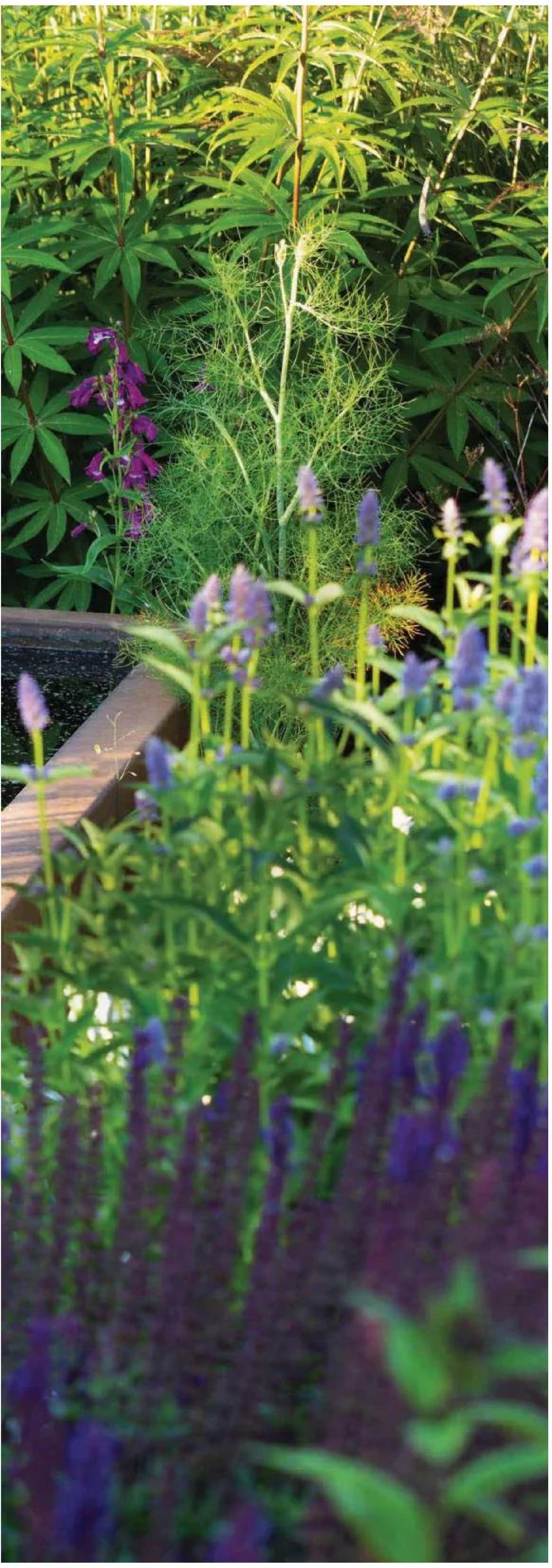
The water tanks in the garden act like visual punctuation marks in the beds, sparkling among the flowers and grasses and reflecting sunlight on to the plants. "We bought the features off-the-peg from Dutch supplier Adezz," says Robert. "They are made from Corten steel, which looks grey on arrival but then weathers to a rusty colour, with an inner black polyurea lining that prevents them from corroding. You then create a sump beneath each tank to hold the water and a pump that pumps it around on a continuous circuit to create a smooth reflective surface on top. The moving water prevents algae from forming, but the tanks also need to be drained and cleaned periodically to keep them in good condition."

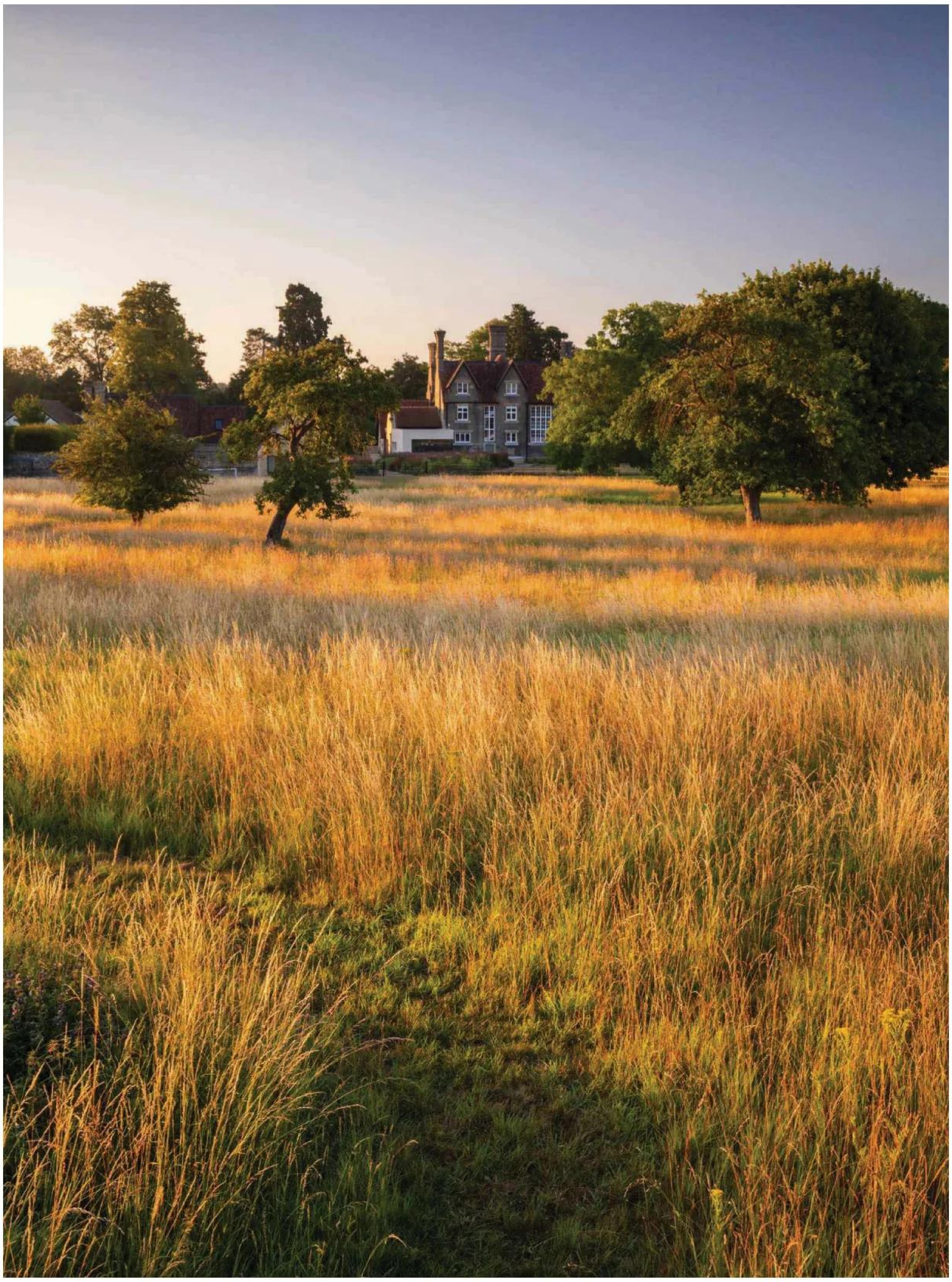
▷ become more prominent, providing structure and interest in winter alongside cuboids of low clipped beech hedging and the grass and perennial seedheads.

Robert's masterplan for the landscape at Park House delivers a succession of food and habitats for wildlife throughout the year, with hedges and trees for nesting, water to sustain many different garden creatures, and climate-resilient planting to support insect populations, which in turn feed bats and the migratory birds that visit the area. "We have also been careful not to include any invasive species that may upset the ecological balance of the wildflower meadow," he says.

Many of the trees in the old orchard had disappeared or were unproductive, and have been replaced with a range of apples, pears and walnuts, which were grown there in the past. "We have also included some more fruit trees in the pool garden, and they collectively help to support pollinators in the spring when the blossom unfurls, while offering Sharon and David – and wildlife – an abundant harvest of fruits and nuts in autumn," adds Robert.

The garden was installed in 2020 during the first Covid lockdown, which meant Robert wasn't able to visit it until much later, but if he had any concerns about the state of the planting,





when he was finally able to visit, they were quickly put to rest – all the plants were in pristine condition, with no weeds in sight. "I think Robert was quite surprised when I said that we had been maintaining it," says Sharon. "We were never avid gardeners before, and had help looking after our previous property, but we found that being in touch with nature during the lockdowns was very relaxing and rewarding. We loved going outside every day to water and weed, enjoying the plants and wildlife, and we've been doing it ever since."

Sharon and David have some help with trimming their boundary hedges and each year a local farmer comes in to mow the meadow and remove the hay, but David mows the grass paths that lead through the meadow himself, and the couple work together to keep the rest of the garden looking good throughout the year. "I've learned a lot about plants, too, and we have added to Robert's original list with others we like," says Sharon. "It's also really satisfying to look at our wonderful garden from the terrace on sunny evenings in the summer, knowing that we have helped to create this beautiful space." □

Above left Nestled among the planting, the Corten steel water tanks reflect light on to textured foliage and flowers, including salvias, including *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'.

Above right The ornamental grasses Robert has used in the garden are a nod to the traditional meadow beyond the garden, which was well established when Robert came to design the garden, a host of butterflies and moths when it flowers in summer.

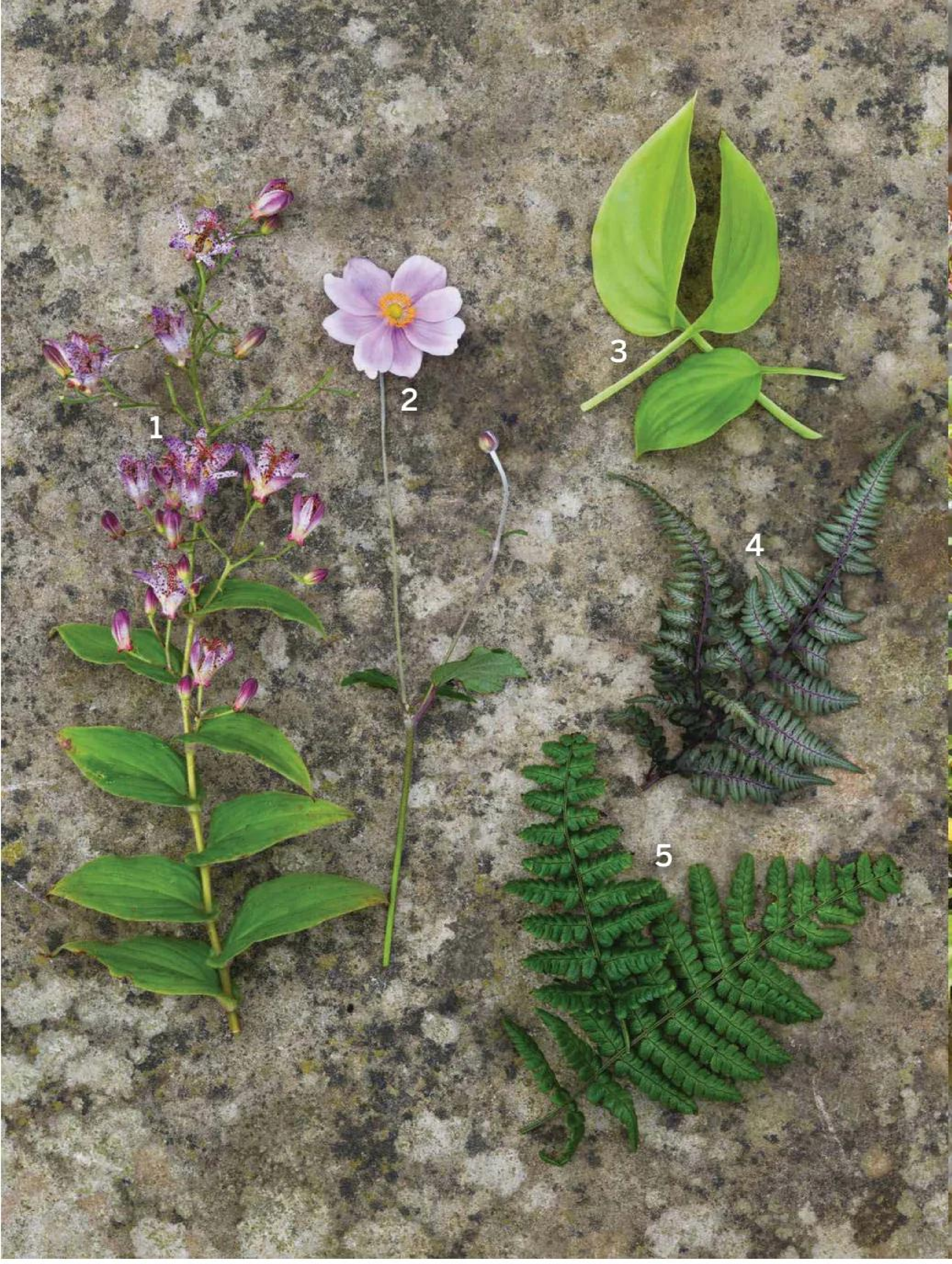
USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Robert Myers' work at **robertmyers-associates.co.uk**

Late summer dreams

From cool pastels and foliage to hot colours, designer Jo Thompson creates three stylish container combinations for autumn

WORDS **JO THOMPSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



PASTELS IN THE SHADE

This is the perfect planter for bringing a shady spot to life. Its simple textured pattern combined with the softening of moss gives it a patina of age that particularly suits this cool combination of shady planting. When I found it, it was already home to a native fern, which was my starting point for this mix of shade-tolerant perennials and foliage, to which I've added dashes of pastel pink from *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Königin Charlotte' and *Tricyrtis* Pink Freckles (= 'Innotripf').

How to achieve the look

Container and composition

I'd had my eye on this planter for quite a while before I decided to bring it into use. It was sitting in a corner of the garden at Water Lane, and it had obtained a softening of moss. When I went over to investigate, I discovered it had the added bonus of a large native fern (probably *Dryopteris dilatata*) already growing in it. The container needed no sprucing up; already with a helpful layer of moss and ferns, it just needed that gentle intervention that underlines all of my garden design.

As a companion to the existing fern, I brought in a Japanese painted fern. The silver sheen of its fronds suggested the anemone, which has pretty, vine-like, dark-green leaves that add to the foliage textures, but also brings a touch of colour without too much glamour. The pastel pinks work perfectly with the other worldly purple-splattered flowers of *Tricyrtis* Pink Freckles (= 'Innotripf'), while a small hosta brings solidity to the otherwise-ethereal forms in this planting combination.

Cultivation and care

Given a moist, peat-free, loam-based compost this is a combination that can largely be left to its own devices. It needs minimal care aside from deadheading and cutting back once the perennials have gone over. At this stage, you could add a planting of dwarf daffodils and other small spring bulbs as a soft and delicate layer before the perennials appear again in summer.

Plants

1 *Tricyrtis* Pink Freckles (= 'Innotripf') A compact *Tricyrtis formosana* cultivar with pink flowers stained white and spotted with burgundy. July – October. Height and spread: 35cm x 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b†.

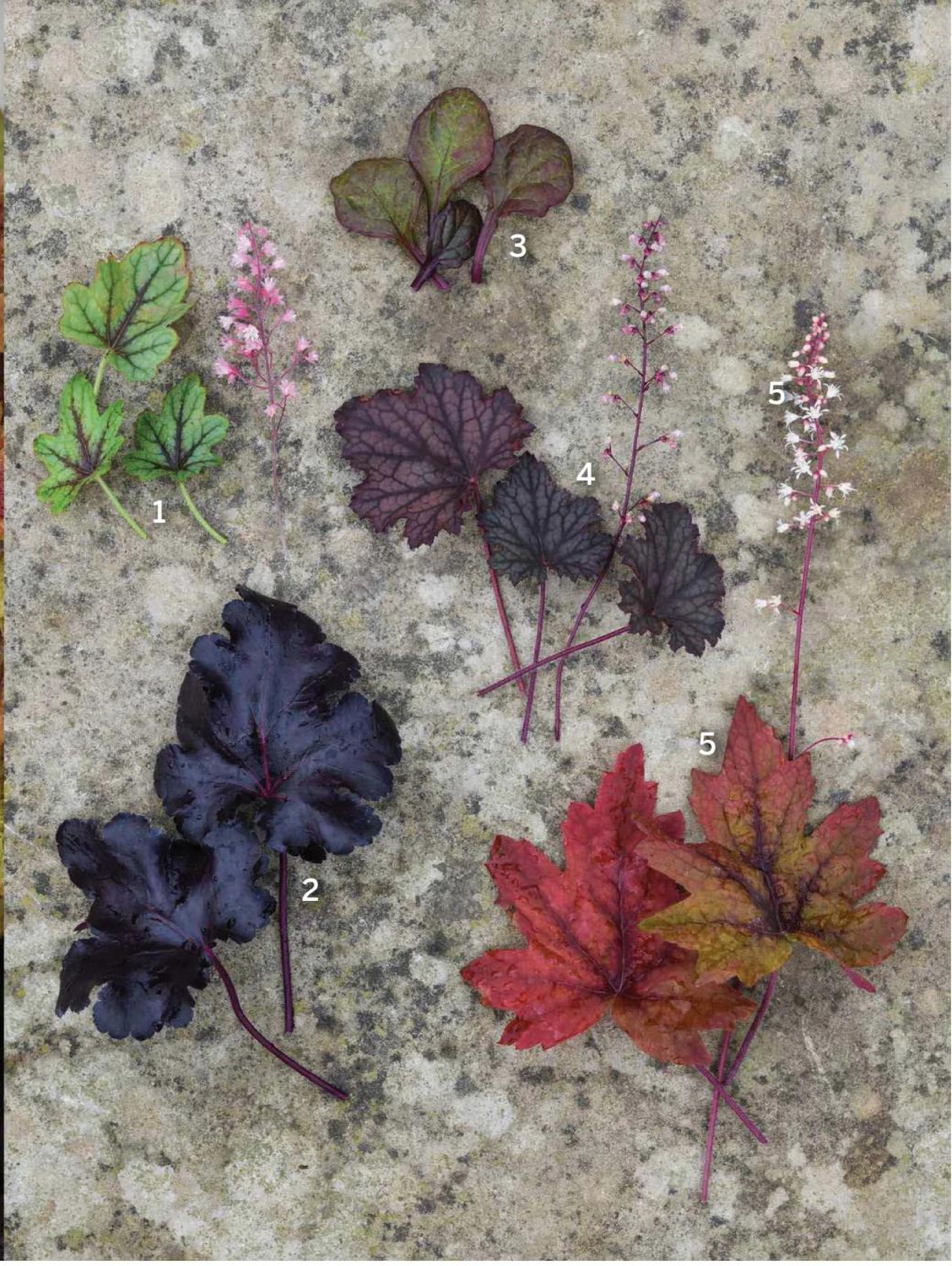
2 *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Königin Charlotte' Masses of large, rich rose-pink flowers on tall, wiry stems. August – October. 1.5m x 60cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

3 *Hosta* 'Hydon Sunset' Heart-shaped foliage starts golden green in spring, slowly becoming a fresher green. Purple flowers in midsummer. 60cm x 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

4 *Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum* 'Apple Court' A form of deciduous Japanese painted fern with silvery grey-green fronds and purple midribs. 35cm x 1m. RHS H5 USDA 5a-8b.

5 *Dryopteris dilatata* Robust, semi-evergreen, native fern with dark-green, toothed fronds. 1.5m x 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



TONES AND LAYERS

This oval terracotta bowl was calling out for a planting as dumpy as its form, yet with a bit of a statement at the same time. Planted up, it can easily be moved on to a table or edge of a wall to be enjoyed at a higher level. There are some extraordinary colourways available in heucheras, heucherellas and tiarellas; they all lend themselves to this simple layering, so it's worth experimenting with different combinations.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
I bought this unassuming container in a garden centre. Its simplicity and dumpy shape makes it the ideal foil for this composition, made up of layers of late-summer and autumnal foliage.

The majority of the foliage in this combination looks very similar. The heucheras and heucherellas are sometimes harder to place in beds and borders, but here they find a happy home in a container, their leaves jostling and complementing each other at the same time.

The tea-coloured tones of x *Heucherella* 'Sweet Tea' have a kind of colour-shifting alchemy going on. These enormous star-like leaves shine ever brighter in shades of cinnamon and burnt orange as autumn approaches. Then, just when you think the colour can't get any more intense, they start to get darker. Come autumn, they brighten up once more. This strange behaviour makes them the perfect partner for other related foliage: the ostentatious black ruffles of *Heuchera* 'Black Pearl' are an excellent foil to the shining patterns of *Heuchera* 'Frosted Violet Dream' and the silvery shapes of x *Heucherella* 'Pink Fizz'.

Cultivation and care
All of these plants enjoy a moist soil and will be happy in a peat-free, loam-based compost, provided you keep an eye on the pot to ensure it doesn't dry out, and snip off the flower spires as they go over. It will also tolerate a little bit of shade.

Plants

1 x *Heucherella* 'Pink Fizz' Large, deeply lobed, green leaves with a light silvering and heavy wine-red to deep-purple veining. Pure-pink flowers emerge out of hot-pink buds. May – October. 50cm x 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
2 *Heuchera* 'Black Pearl' Jet-black ruffled leaves and slightly pinkish-white flowers. May – October. 30cm x 30cm. RHS H6.
3 *Bergenia* 'Pink Dragonfly' Oval, evergreen leaves with clusters of vivid-pink spring flowers. 30cm x 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
4 *Heuchera* 'Frosted Violet Dream' Serrated foliage of deepest purple with hue of violet blue. Its long spires of white flowers are pink in bud. 60cm x 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
5 x *Heucherella* 'Sweet Tea' Star-like lobed leaves, intensely coloured in a brighter coral-brown through summer, then fading as autumn approaches. Spires of foam-like white flowers. May – October. 45cm x 35cm. RHS H6.

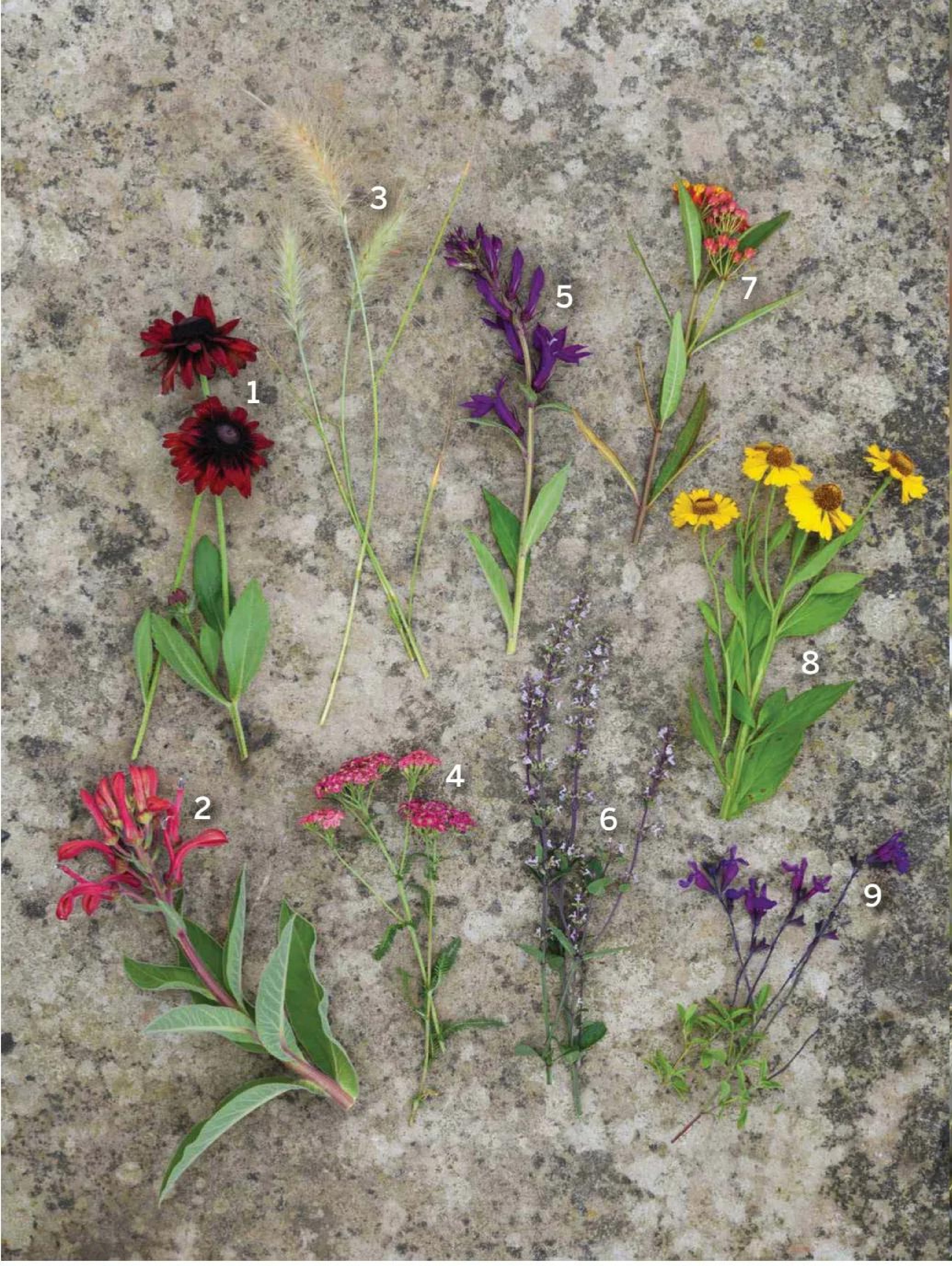
COOP. VENLOSE VEILING 1965

SCAN HERE
Watch Jo explain this planting scheme in our video. Simply scan the QR code with your phone camera or head to **gardensillustrated.com/pot-for-sept**

With thanks to

Plants
• How Green
Tel 01732 700382,
howgreennursery.co.uk
Wholesale only.

Location
• Water Lane Walled Garden
waterlane.net



MEADOW MAGIC

Inspiration came from the idea of a meadow full of the warmer colours that light up the garden at this time of year. Sumptuous maroons and deep reds are provided by the coneflower, picked up in the magnificent yet curious *Lobelia tupa* and asclepias. Yellow daisies of helenium are a nod to the meadows that inspired me, as are the tufty panicles of the *Pennisetum villosum*. Punctuations of purple are provided by *Lobelia* x *speciosa* 'Hadspen Purple' and the salvia.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
Late summer is the time when colour-wise, everything is heating up in the garden. We know that reds, oranges, purples and yellows work well together: this planting introduces these tones while using some more unusual shapes such as the *Asclepias curassavica* and the lobelia, with the achillea's pink umbels combatting any potential harshness in the colour combinations. The 'neutral' spires of the nepeta and the tufted whitish rabbit-tail panicles of the pennisetum create a pale background wash to link to the grassy area beyond.

The plants were brought to this heavy stone planter, which was lying empty in the garden here at Water Lane – too weighty to move. The intention was to avoid an overly ornamental planting of it, following instead a theme of a kind of natural chaos to create a contrast against the softened surfaces of this otherwise uncompromising container. The rudbeckia, helenium and purple lobelia are the stars of the mix, with grasses and nepeta used to blur the edges.

This planting sits happily in any sunny spot; the combination of flower shapes work well against a neutral, open background.

Cultivation and care
This combination enjoys the heat of the sun, and a morning water will keep it going through to October, when the asclepias can be removed and the perennials cut back. Then you can add with some spring bulbs.

Plants

1 *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Enchanted Velvet Flame' Maroon cone-flower. July – October. 50cm x 30cm. RHS H3, USDA 3a-7b.
2 *Lobelia tupa* Red tubular flowers. July – October. 1.2m x 90cm. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.
3 *Pennisetum villosum* Perennial grass. July – September. 60cm x 60cm. AGM. RHS H3.
4 *Achillea millefolium* 'Lilac Beauty' Flowers fade with age. May – September. 80cm x 60cm.
5 *Lobelia* x *speciosa* 'Hadspen Purple' Purple flowers, purple-tinged stems. July –September. 60cm x 40cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
6 *Nepeta nuda* 'Romany Dusk' Dark stems, pale flowers. July – August. 1m x 40cm. AGM. RHS H7.
7 *Asclepias curassavica* Red and yellow umbels. June – September. RHS H1C, USDA 9a-11.
8 *Helenium* 'Riverton Beauty' July – September. 1m x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
9 *Salvia* x *jamensis* 'Ignition Purple' Blue-purple flowers. June – October. 50cm x 30cm.

Bedding in

In just under nine years, the owners of Arvensis Nursery in Wiltshire have created a mature garden that displays their high-quality perennials

WORDS JONNY BRUCE PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM

IN BRIEF

What Garden of a perennials nursery offering a naturalistic palette that bridges the gap between a specialist and conventional wholesale nursery.

Where Wiltshire.

Size Four-and-a-half acre nursery, including a half-acre display garden, within an 11-acre site containing borders, woodlands and a stream.

Soil Heavy clay with a high pH but improved with organic matter.

Climate Exposed to sun and wind. Wiltshire can be a cold county but the nursery benefits from its elevated position, which allows the worst of the frost to flow down the slope.

Hardiness zone USDA 9.

The recently renovated stock beds at Arvensis occupy the uppermost terraces and provide propagation material for the nursery, as well as functioning as a display garden for customers.

Walking through the vibrant stock beds and ordered rows of pots at Arvensis Perennials, it is remarkable to realise how Gussy and Rob Macdougall have transformed this windswept four-and-a-half-acre site just north of Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire. In August 2015, the pair spent three weeks on the road, camping and visiting gardens and nurseries, looking for inspiration and somewhere to set up their own business.

It was master grower Marina Christopher who tipped them off about the sale of Evolution Plants, the nursery of plant explorer Tom Mitchell. By October they had bought it. Tom had invested substantially in the site, creating terraces and stock beds and adding potting sheds, polytunnels and a – not inexpensive – Hartley Botanic glasshouse. Although, inevitably, they inherited some problems, Rob explains that having the infrastructure in place "really helped us to hit the ground running."

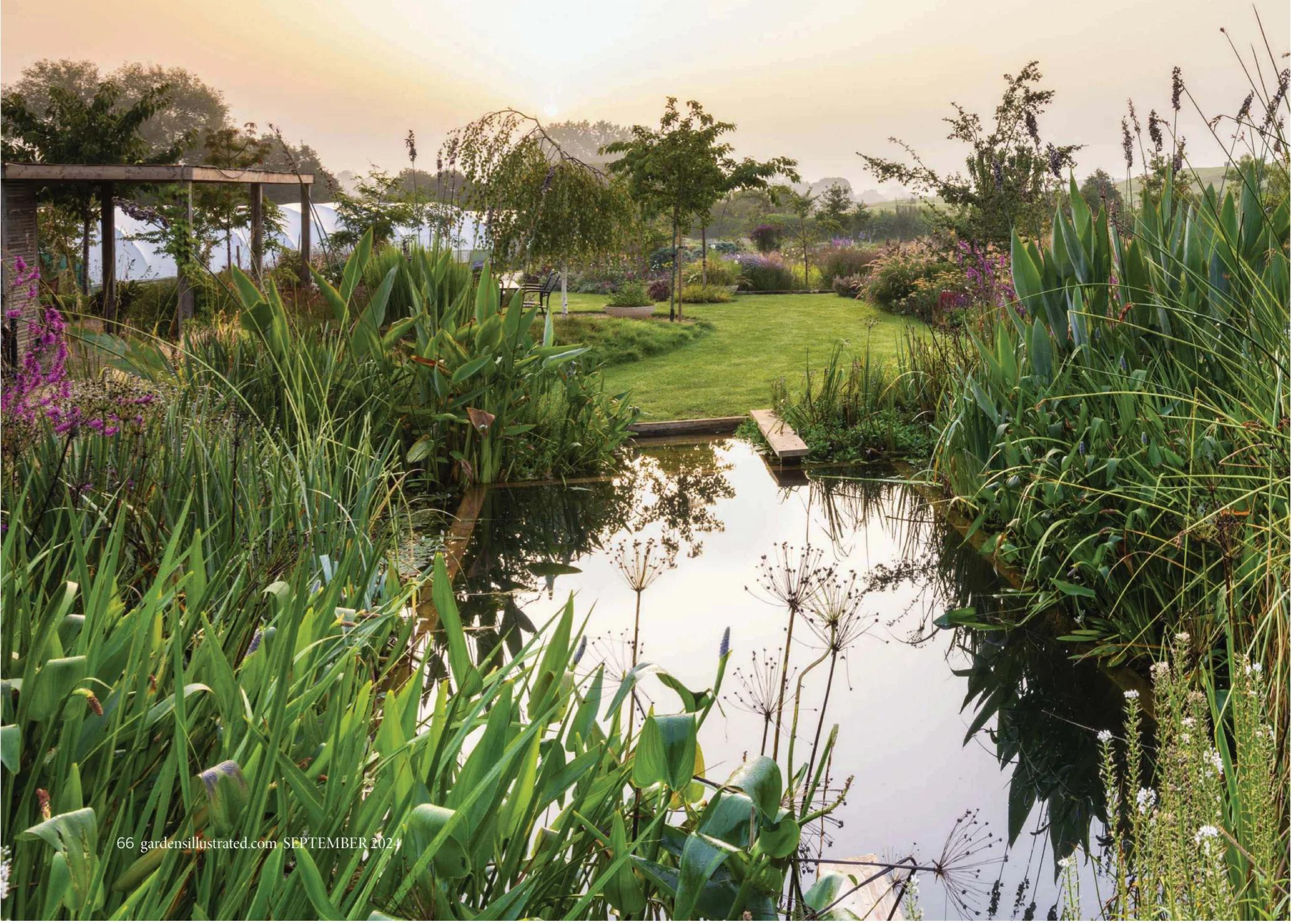
The pair brought with them a wealth of knowledge, partly cultivated during their time with Chris and Toby Marchant at Orchard Dene Nurseries, which closed in 2019. Arvensis operates on a similar model, working closely with designers and seeking to bridge the gap between wholesale and specialist nurseries. It offers a palette of naturalistic plants, with plenty of grasses, that lends itself to the "meadowy aesthetic" of contemporary designers. In contrast to Tom Mitchell's collection of rare and hard-to-grow plants, Gussy and Rob prefer a range of "good-doers". However, they are always on the lookout to ensure their assortment contains innovative cultivars, such as the delicate golden form of eyebrow grass, *Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition' or the recent selection of *Verbena* x *baileyana* 'Purple Haze' (akin to a tall *Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton') found in the garden of Malcolm Allison of Malcolm Allison Plants.

The couple run a tight ship, an efficient system. Rob heads up the production while Gussy is responsible for sales and deals with customers. They are supported by a dedicated team of part-time workers but it is impressive that, despite the increasing numbers of orders, Gussy still manages the mail-order side of the business almost single-handedly. Unlike many wholesale nurseries, they rarely buy plants for direct sale, preferring their own propagation, buying in bare-root plants or rooted cuttings. "Every year we are increasing the amount we propagate ourselves," explains Rob. This is supported by the recently renovated stock beds, which provide seeds, cuttings and divisions ably taken by Rob's assistant propagator, Tom Perry.

Avoiding imported plants for direct resale inevitably leads to holes in supply, but it reduces ▷

This image Rob built the wildlife pond himself, helped by the designer Helen Johnson who created the planting plan – a mix of native and non-native plants. The spears and shields of *Thalia dealbata* combine well with the pink spires of *Lythrum* and graphic seedheads of *Butomus umbellatus*.

Facing page *Pennisetum orientale* 'Tall Tails' rises up out of one of the typical meadowy display borders, including yellow *Ratibida pinnata* and the bright-pink inflorescences of *Salvia involucrata*.

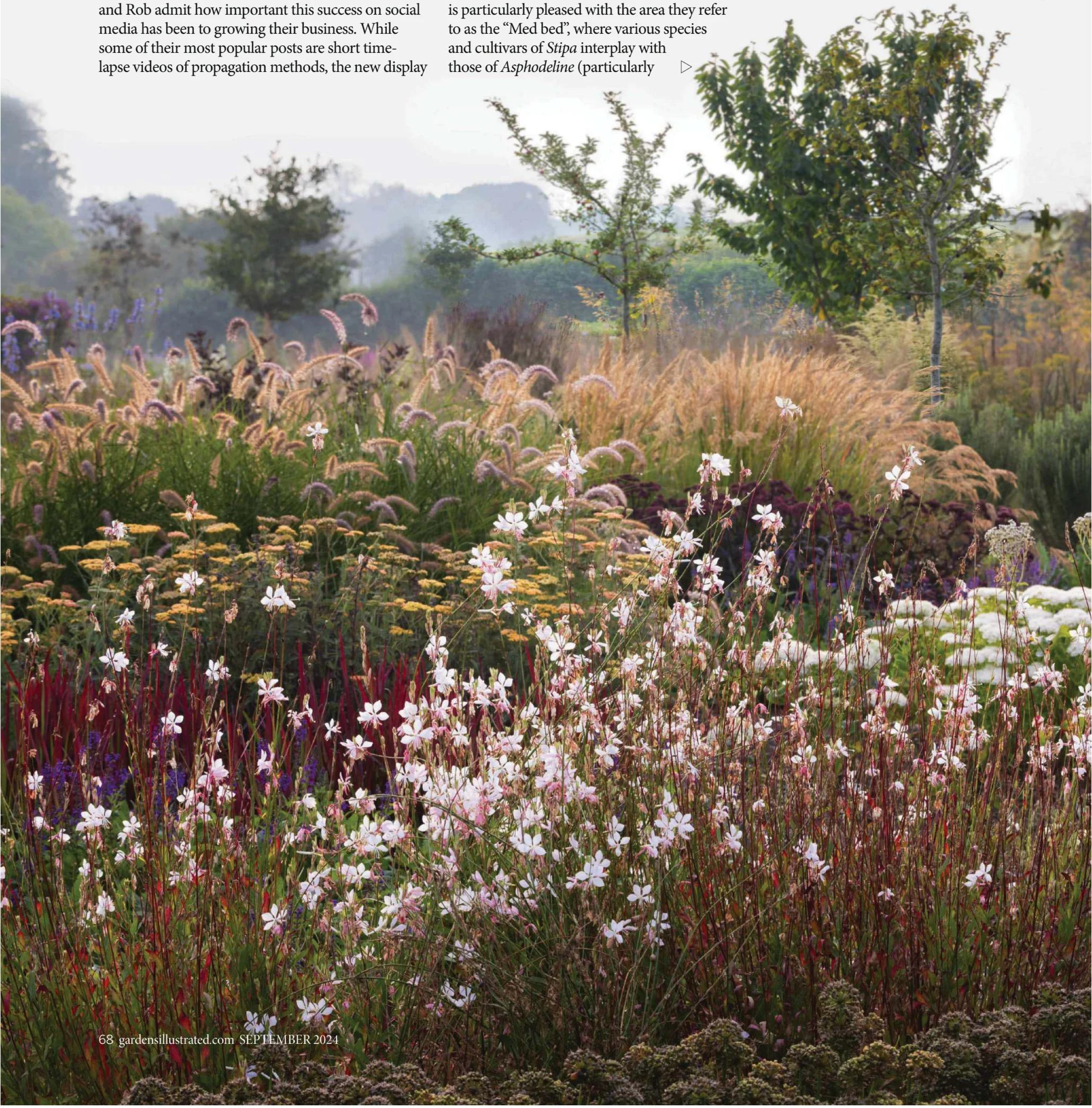


The new display beds provide a stunning backdrop and showcase the diversity of their assortment

▷ the plant's carbon footprint. While Gussy and Rob admit it can be challenging for designers, they feel it is important to educate their customers that it is unsustainable to expect all plants to be available at all times of the year. Arvensis also ensures a peat-free potting mix in exclusively recyclable, taupe pots (many regular pots are recyclable but most automated recycling systems cannot detect black plastic), which helps lighten the environmental burden of large planting projects.

Although the nursery is not open to the general public, Rob has been able to share the nursery's work with its many followers on Instagram. Both Gussy and Rob admit how important this success on social media has been to growing their business. While some of their most popular posts are short time-lapse videos of propagation methods, the new display beds provide a stunning backdrop and showcase the diversity of their assortment. "It's really about inspiring designers, for them to see the full potential of mature plants in a garden context," says Rob.

The garden has steadily grown in recent years and is dutifully tended by Duncan Armstrong, who spends two to three days a week maintaining, editing and extending these curving borders. While Arvensis stocks a healthy selection of woodland plants, and Rob and Gussy have planted more than 100 trees, these are still too young to provide sufficient cover for any shade-adapted plants in the borders. For now, the borders embrace sun lovers, and Duncan is particularly pleased with the area they refer to as the "Med bed", where various species and cultivars of *Stipa* interplay with those of *Asphodeline* (particularly ▷



Grasses are an important aspect to Arvensis' naturalistic palette. Here the soft tails of *Pennisetum orientale* 'Karley Rose' provide a pleasant contrast to the flat and fading heads of *Achillea* 'Terracotta'. The red of Japanese blood grass, *Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra', is picked up in the stems of *Oenothera lindheimeri*.

Rob heads up the production while Gussy manages the mail-order side of the business almost single-handedly

Rob and Gussy Macdougall among the Arvensis sale beds. The tray of *Calamintha nepeta* in 9cm pots Rob is holding is typical of the stock the nursery sells. The pair find these smaller sizes establish better and can be moved on more quickly, reducing the risk of a build-up of pests and diseases.

It's really about inspiring designers, for them to see the full potential of mature plants in a garden context

▷ for their seedheads), papery *Catananche*, pale-yellow *Oenothera stricta* 'Sulphurea' and many other drought-tolerant perennials in a pastel palette.

In contrast to comfortable and overflowing borders, the pots are kept fastidiously neat. When growing plants in a nursery, especially under cover, it is easy for pests and disease to get out of control, and while it might seem easier to reach for a chemical spray, the first and by far most effective control is good plant health and hygiene. Every time plants are moved in the tunnels at Arvensis, which is often, the groundcover fabric is cleaned and sterilised. This flow of plants is partly facilitated by the small pot sizes offered, which keeps prices low and helps to keep the plants moving. Gussy's life is also made easier and the business more efficient by offering only 9cm or 2L pots. In most cases, despite a client's impatient demands, smaller plants are better value for money as they will quickly establish.

From the efficiency of the pots and the ordering system to the series of large, decorative bowls, which Rob manufactured himself to be sold as ready-made planters, there are also so many details around the nursery that reveal the couple's creative ingenuity and business sense. Gussy and Rob have created a beautiful home for their two daughters, too. While so many specialist nurseries are closing, it is exciting to consider that next year will be Arvensis' tenth anniversary, and to know that the nursery and its garden are thriving. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Follow Arvensis on Instagram
@arvensisperennials

Facing page *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Ferner Osten', a medium height grass with deep-red flowers and good autumn colour in the foliage, emerges alongside the fading seedheads of *Hylotelephium* x *mottramianum* 'Herbstfreude' in the Arvensis display garden.

This image Since taking over the site, Gussy and Rob have planted more than 100 trees to create shade and soften the nursery's exposed aspect.

ANDY JASPER

The new CEO of the Eden Project on his excitement about a new chapter, the legacy he's left at the National Trust and his joy at heading home to Cornwall

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON PORTRAIT RACHEL WARNE

The day after I interview Andy Jasper – at Gertrude Jekyll's former house and garden at Munstead Wood in Surrey – about his plans as director of gardens and parklands at the National Trust, I receive an email announcing his resignation. Was it something I said?

A few hours later, Andy pings across an apologetic text, explaining that he had to stay silent until everything had been signed off with his new job. So we schedule another conversation, about the role which has tempted him away from the National Trust after just three years: CEO of the Eden Project, based in his native Cornwall.

In fact, Andy is not new to Eden, having already done a stint there from 2000 to 2012. But with his typical puppyish enthusiasm, he states: "This is a huge step up for me. When I left, I was a junior director, having been there since the beginning. My role had morphed from being in charge of research to the beginnings of the Eden International project."

> I WAS STAGGERED BY THE QUALITY OF HORTICULTURE. ANY GARDENER WHO VISITS WILL BE BLOWN AWAY

A lot has indeed changed since 2012. Eight schemes are currently listed as in development by Eden, in addition to the iconic original garden, consisting of giant biomes set in an abandoned tin mine in Cornwall. Some projects are as far afield as China, Dubai and Australia, while others, such as a rainforest restoration scheme in Costa Rica, appear to involve little more than a watching brief and loan of the brand name.

Andy's focus, as he takes up the CEO role this month, is on one new development which is (slightly) closer to home – at Morecambe, in Lancashire. This is to be a set of four cockleshell biomes sitting right on the seafront, on the site of an old amusement park. "It's there right in front of you," says Andy. "An element of showmanship is really important in a seaside town."

As with the original Eden, the Morecambe project is as much about regeneration as it is about conservation. "We are talking to local businesses and finding out how they can be involved," he says. "We really believe in using local people and products. I've seen at first hand the potential transformation, having lived in Cornwall in the 1980s."

One of seven children, Andy grew up in St Just, where his father was vicar. The rambling vicarage garden was an early inspiration. "It was almost a designed landscape, with camellias, rhododendrons, lots of unusual hybrids and various random standing stones and crosses." Now in his early fifties, Andy's Cornish identity clearly remains important to him, as does a sense of social responsibility, which is perhaps derived in part from his father's example. A relative latecomer to gardens, he spent the first decade of his career working in social services with young offenders and families in Berkshire, before joining the Eden Project in 2000, having completed a degree in heritage management at the University of Exeter.

Andy reacts to the suggestion that Eden, as a visitor attraction, is a long way from the fine horticulture of many National Trust gardens. "After ten years I went back to Eden and was staggered by the quality of the horticulture," he insists. "I think that any gardener who visits now will be blown away."

But he acknowledges that Eden is a different experience to a traditional country-house garden, bracketing it with attractions such as the walled garden at Alnwick, and Wisley, the RHS's flagship garden, where Andy oversaw the creation of a vast new shop and nursery. He has ambitions to "sharpen up" the horticulture at Eden, and won't be shy of getting involved with the details of horticultural design. Beneath that genial exterior lies a terrier-like determination to get things done.

As for the National Trust, Andy says he leaves with 117 more gardeners in post than when he arrived, having also increased the number of 18-month apprenticeships from 17 to 40. In his short time at the Trust, he always maintained that "the gardeners are the stars" and sought to find ways of empowering them – chiefly by means of what he termed a "united alliance" of curator, head gardener and countryside manager at each property. "The brilliant thing about head gardeners is that they are fantastic planners," he says. "They have to be really organised."

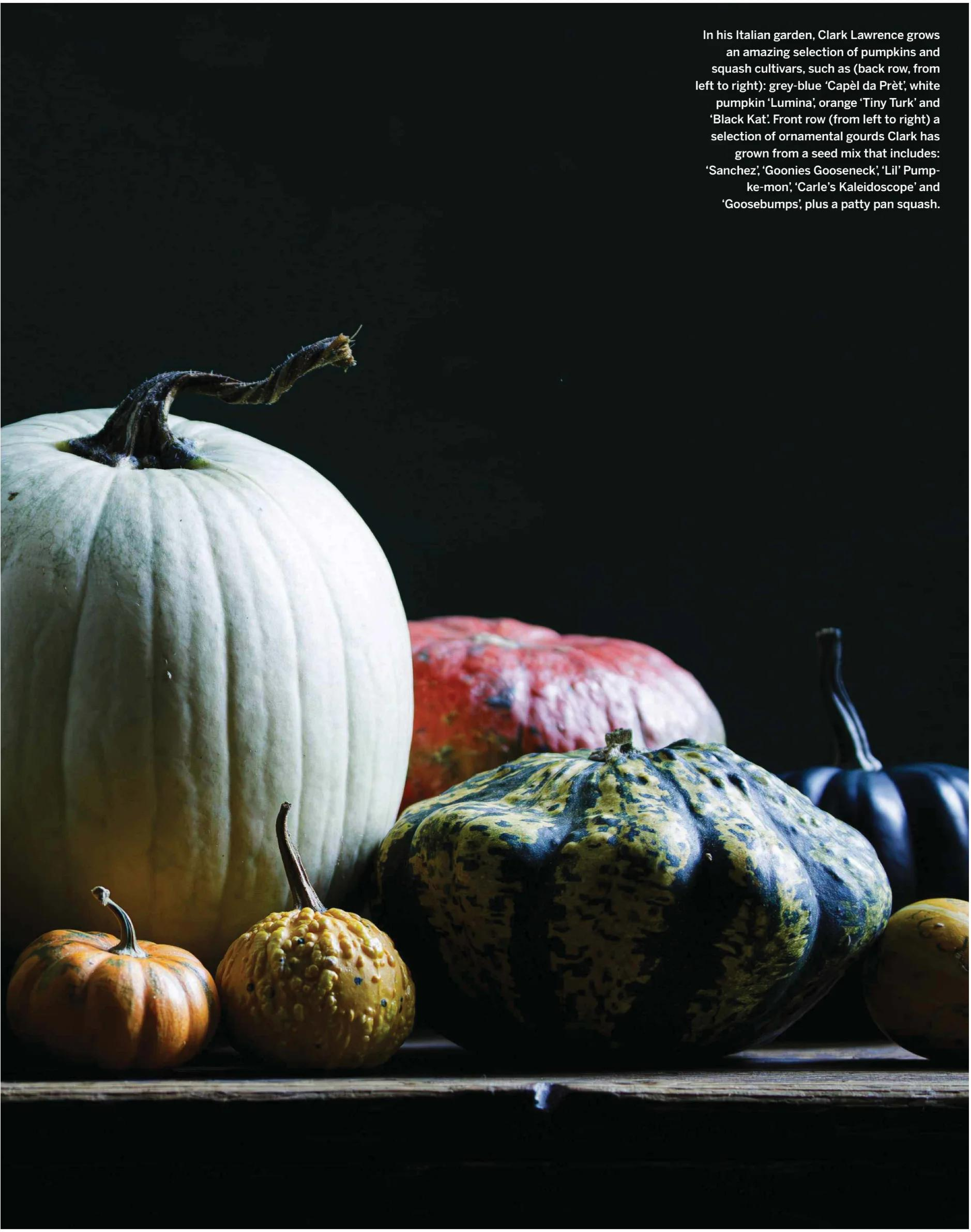
Andy's chief legacy at the National Trust is likely to be the various new funding programmes he set up, including a pot of £1.5 million of central unrestricted funds for garden grants of up to £35,000. One outcome of that initiative is mass narcissi plantings at Stourhead that have lit up early spring at the landscape garden. Andy has instigated another, more ambitious investment programme, named Grow 4, which he hopes will fund significant changes at ten National Trust gardens over the next five years – places such as Lamb House, in Rye, which has high visitor numbers but no notable garden.

Three years is not a long time to have spent in a post such as director of gardens at the National Trust. But on the other hand, it is clear that Andy Jasper was made an offer he simply couldn't refuse. The Cornishman is going home. □

My sweet gourd

Clark Lawrence, an American living in the heart of Italy's pumpkin province, loves growing different cultivars of pumpkins and ornamental gourds for their sweet flavours and fabulous looks

PHOTOGRAPHS **JOHN CAMPBELL**



In his Italian garden, Clark Lawrence grows an amazing selection of pumpkins and squash cultivars, such as (back row, from left to right): grey-blue 'Capèl da Prèt', white pumpkin 'Lumina', orange 'Tiny Turk' and 'Black Kat'. Front row (from left to right) a selection of ornamental gourds Clark has grown from a seed mix that includes: 'Sanchez', 'Goonies Gooseneck', 'Lil' Pump-ke-mon', 'Carle's Kaleidoscope' and 'Goosebumps', plus a patty pan squash.

Pumpkins bring joy – just place the little, white variety called ‘Baby Boo’ in the hands of a small child and watch their eyes light up. When they are a few years older, pass them a bright-orange pumpkin such as ‘Sankt Martin’ that weighs about the same as a newborn baby, and they will often hug and cuddle it.

Being American, I have always loved pumpkins, gourds, ornamental corn and anything from the garden that Americans associate with late-summer harvests and Halloween. I now garden in Mantua, in perhaps the most famous pumpkin province of Italy, and grow oddities nobody else in the area knows about – I figure there’s no need to grow the same delicious edible pumpkins Italians already do, so have specialised in ornamental gourds, most small enough to fit into the palm of your hand.

My vegetable garden is only 20m x 22m and almost half of it is shaded by four walnut trees that I don’t have the heart to cut down, so I have to grow vertically on bamboo sticks and trellises. I grow popcorn, sunflowers, heirloom beans, amaranth, zinnias, shiso and a few different species of *Ipomoea* to create a bit of a jungle scene. Castor oil plants in deep reds and dark green add height, colour and botanical interest. But it is really the pumpkins that rule here. The whole space is dominated by a gourd tunnel, which runs down the middle of the garden, shading a brick walk and dividing my ten vegetable beds into two rows of five.

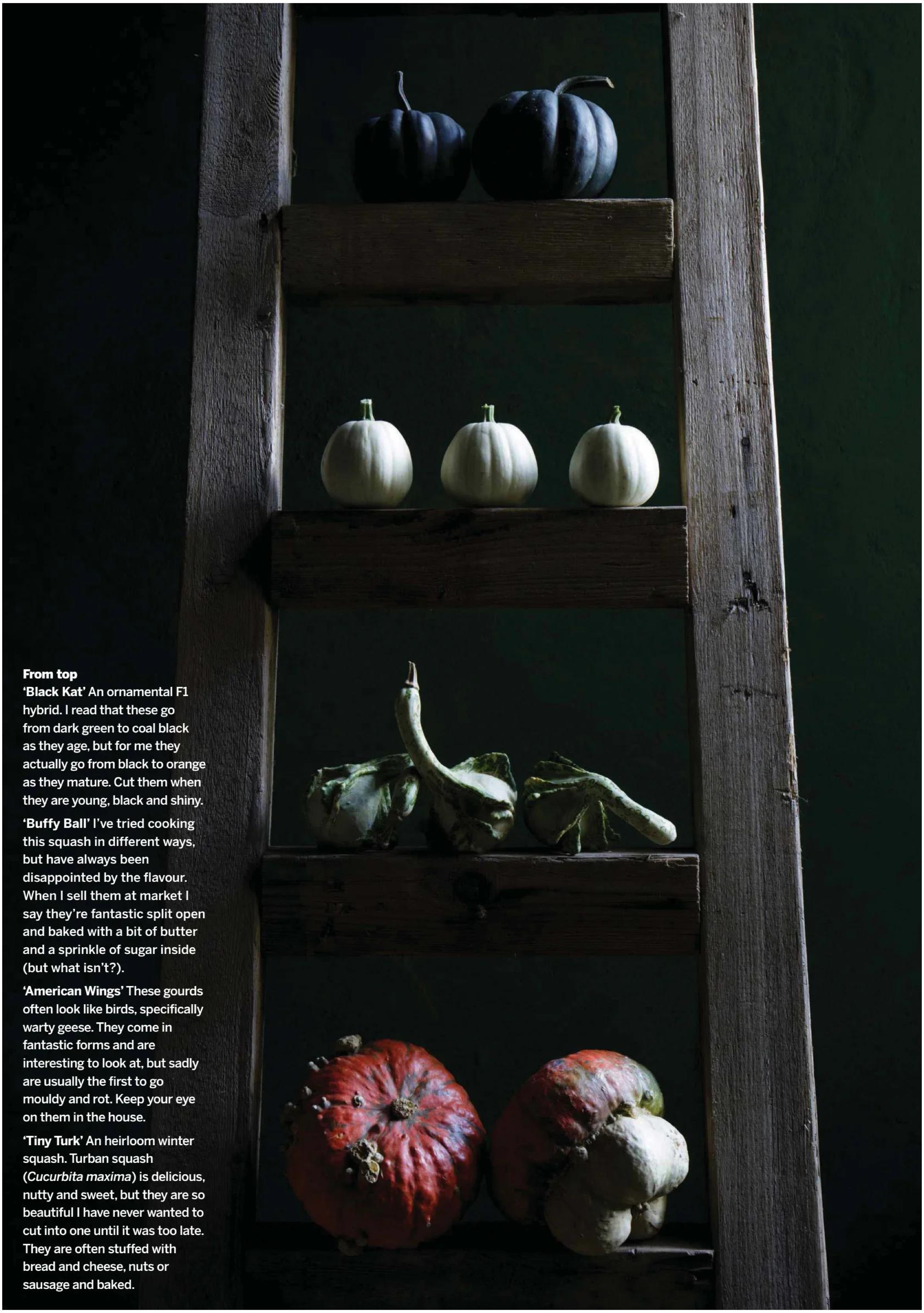
I’ve tried growing many kinds of Cucurbitaceae, including the sweet-smelling, tennis-ball sized Queen Anne’s pocket melon (*Cucumis melo*), luffa (*Luffa aegyptiaca*), kiwano (*Cucumis metuliferus*) and cucamelons, also known as mouse melons (*Melothria scabra*). Any of the prickly cucumbers (*Cucumis hirsutus*, *Cucumis dipsaceus*, *Cucumis myriocarpus*, *Cucumis africanus*) make a great trellis cover and can also be grown in large pots on a balcony.

Every year I try about ten new cultivars from seeds. I love different shades of orange, but the garden is more interesting with some little black-and-white pumpkins, peachy pink ones covered in warts, bright-yellow carving pumpkins and lime-green gourds too. Some dry well and can be made into mini birdhouses or bowls.

The more you cultivate specific plants, the more you appreciate small details that are rarely mentioned in seed catalogues or websites. The most amazing but under-celebrated feature of cucurbits for me is the geometric perfection and strength of their tendrils. How quickly they grip on to whatever stick or support is near them and then coil up into a spring, twisting in two directions from the centre toward the extremities. They really know how to hold on. Tug at one, and its resilience will surprise you.

The flowers of many cucurbits are edible, but some are simply too beautiful to eat. Those of the bottle gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*) have five petals with rounded tips. As night falls, its crinkled, tissue-paper buds open into ▷

To continue turn to page 80



From top

'Black Kat' An ornamental F1 hybrid. I read that these go from dark green to coal black as they age, but for me they actually go from black to orange as they mature. Cut them when they are young, black and shiny.

'Buffy Ball' I've tried cooking this squash in different ways, but have always been disappointed by the flavour. When I sell them at market I say they're fantastic split open and baked with a bit of butter and a sprinkle of sugar inside (but what isn't?).

'American Wings' These gourds often look like birds, specifically warty geese. They come in fantastic forms and are interesting to look at, but sadly are usually the first to go mouldy and rot. Keep your eye on them in the house.

'Tiny Turk' An heirloom winter squash. Turban squash (*Cucurbita maxima*) is delicious, nutty and sweet, but they are so beautiful I have never wanted to cut into one until it was too late. They are often stuffed with bread and cheese, nuts or sausage and baked.

Clark's top pumpkins and gourds

1 'Lunch Lady' A large, bitter gourd, covered in warts. Vines are strong enough to hold the 2-9kg fruits.

2 'Bule' gourd, pronounced 'boo-lay'. French heirloom gourd like a green warty apple. A vigorous climber with exquisite white flowers. Dry to create large rattles.

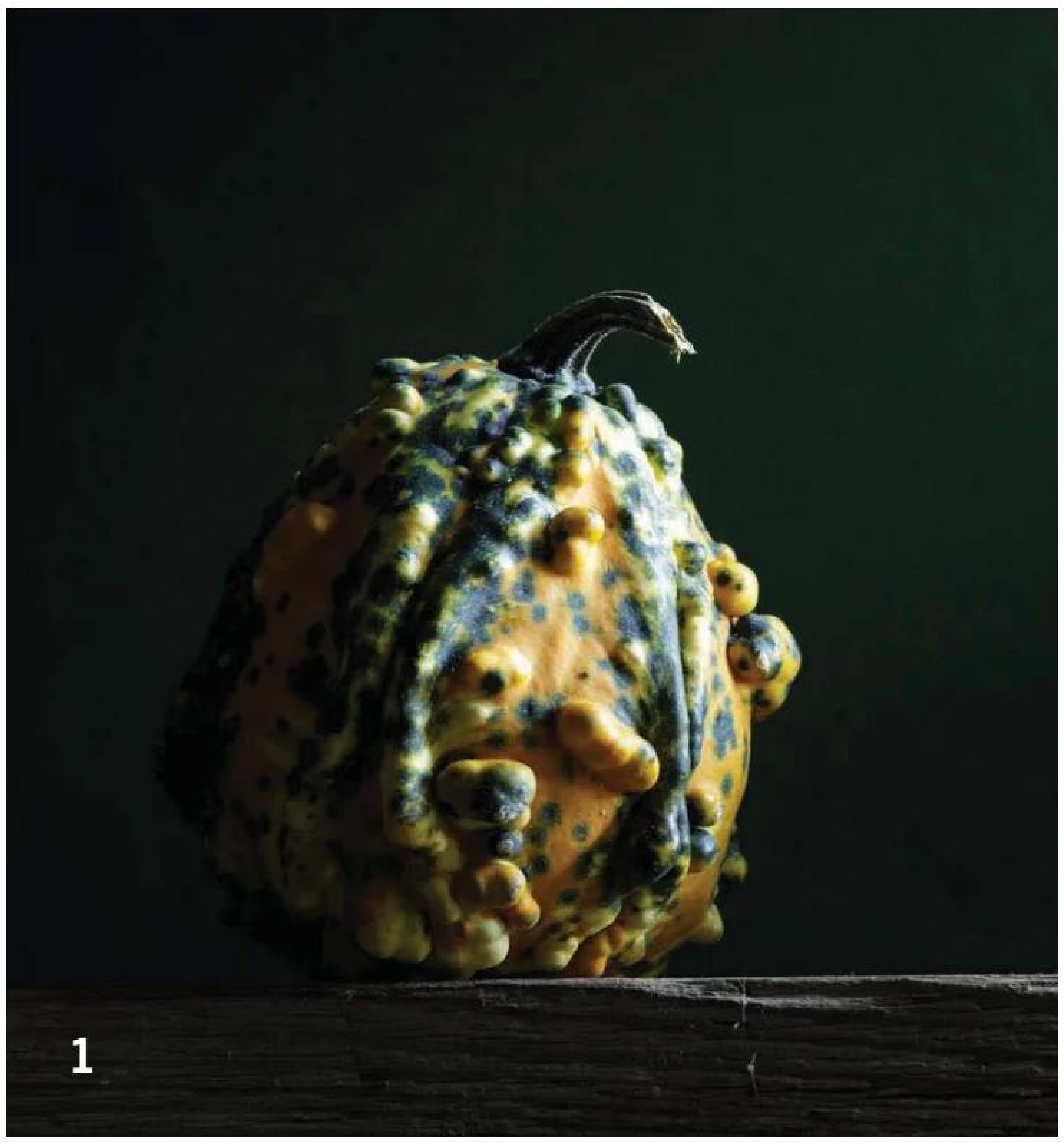
3 'Moon Beam' F1 My favourite white pumpkin, excellent for carving, with strong stems. Long lasting. Averaging 3-4kg in weight, it is a slightly smaller version of 'Honey Moon'. When you're looking to buy seeds, keep the two words separate, as Moonbeam is a saucer-shaped, scalloped, F1 white patty pan summer squash.

4 *Cucurbita argyrosperma* The silver seed gourd, or Cushaw green-striped squash, is a Mexican winter squash. Its name is no lie; the seeds are lined with silver. It's the only pumpkin I know that's cultivated for its edible flowers, seeds and vine shoots, rather than its bitter flesh, which I give to my goats.

5 **'Warts Galore'** Some of these gourds can be nearly black. They make fantastic Halloween decorations. Add pipe-cleaner legs and big googly eyes and you have a spider; add wings and hang from their stems, and you have bats. Great fun for kids who aren't ready for carving.

6 'Galeuse D'Eysines' The fruit of this French heirloom squash cultivar weighs 4.5-7kg and is often grown more for its peanutty bumps than the flavour of its flesh. The blisters are actually concentrations of sugars that come to the surface as it matures. It's sweet, but the flesh too soft and watery – better for soup than pies.

7 'Chicago Warted Hubbard' This dark-green winter squash is as sweet and delicious as it is ugly. Golden flesh excellent for baking. Fruits weigh 6kg on average.



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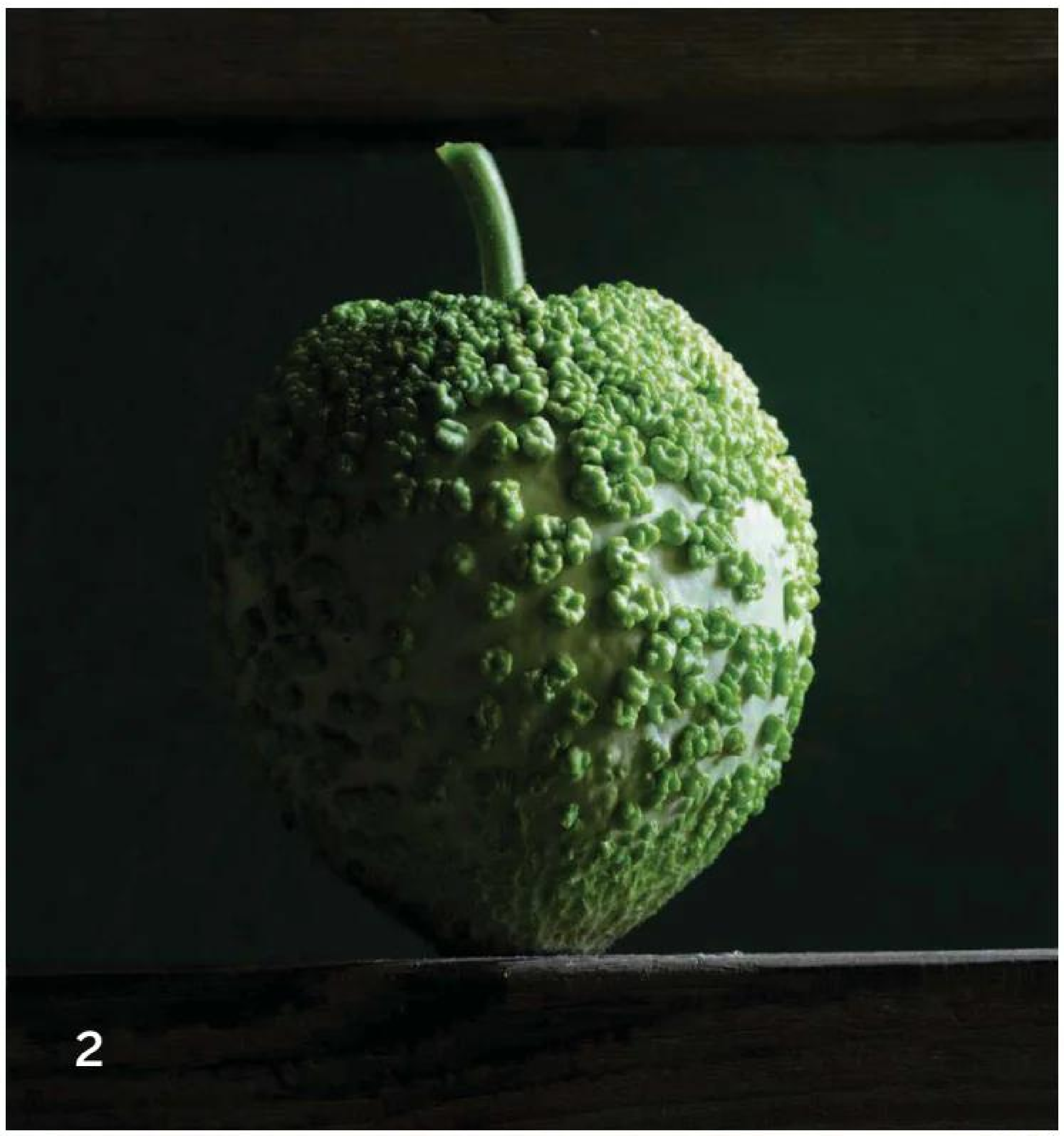

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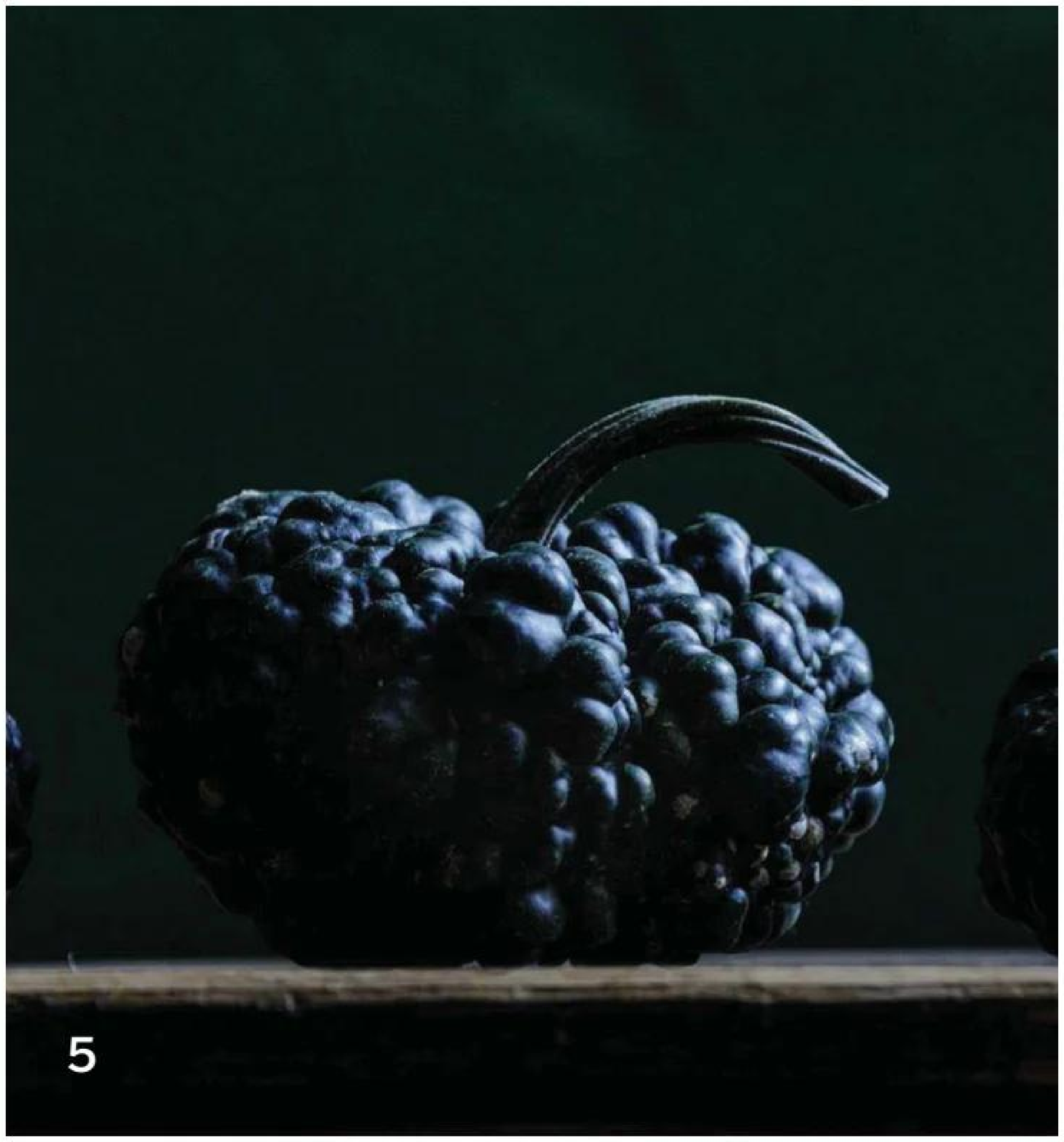

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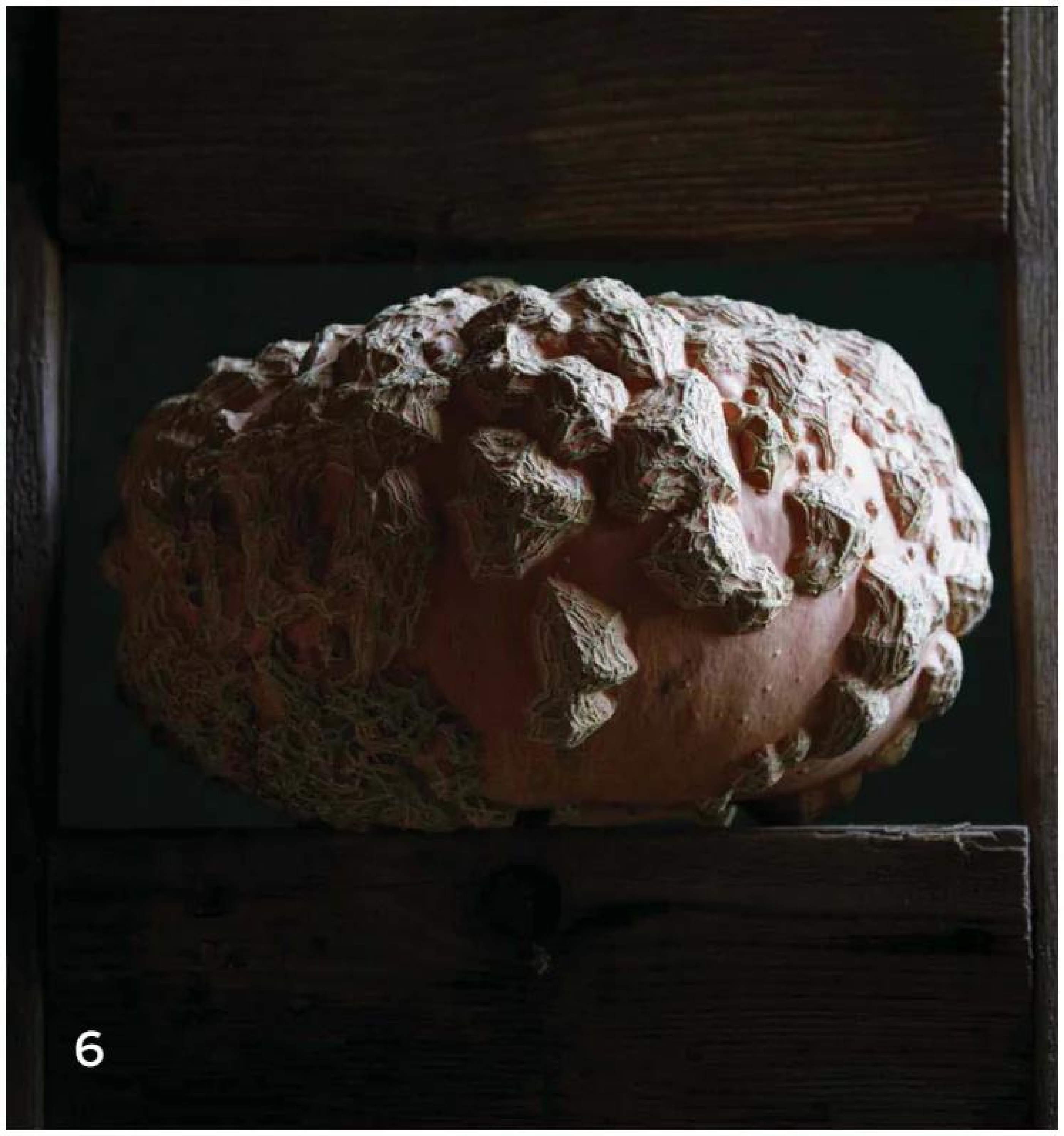

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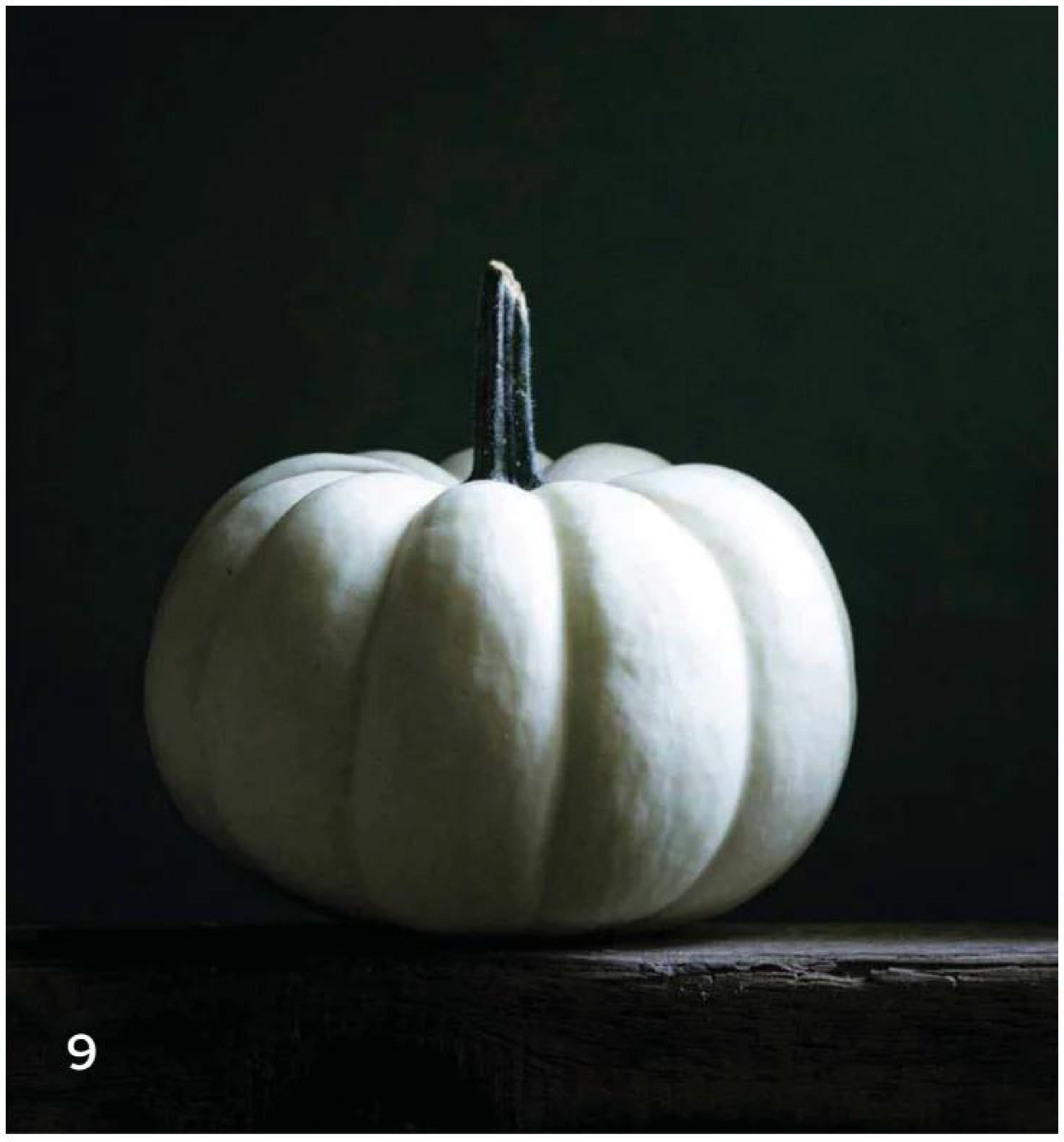

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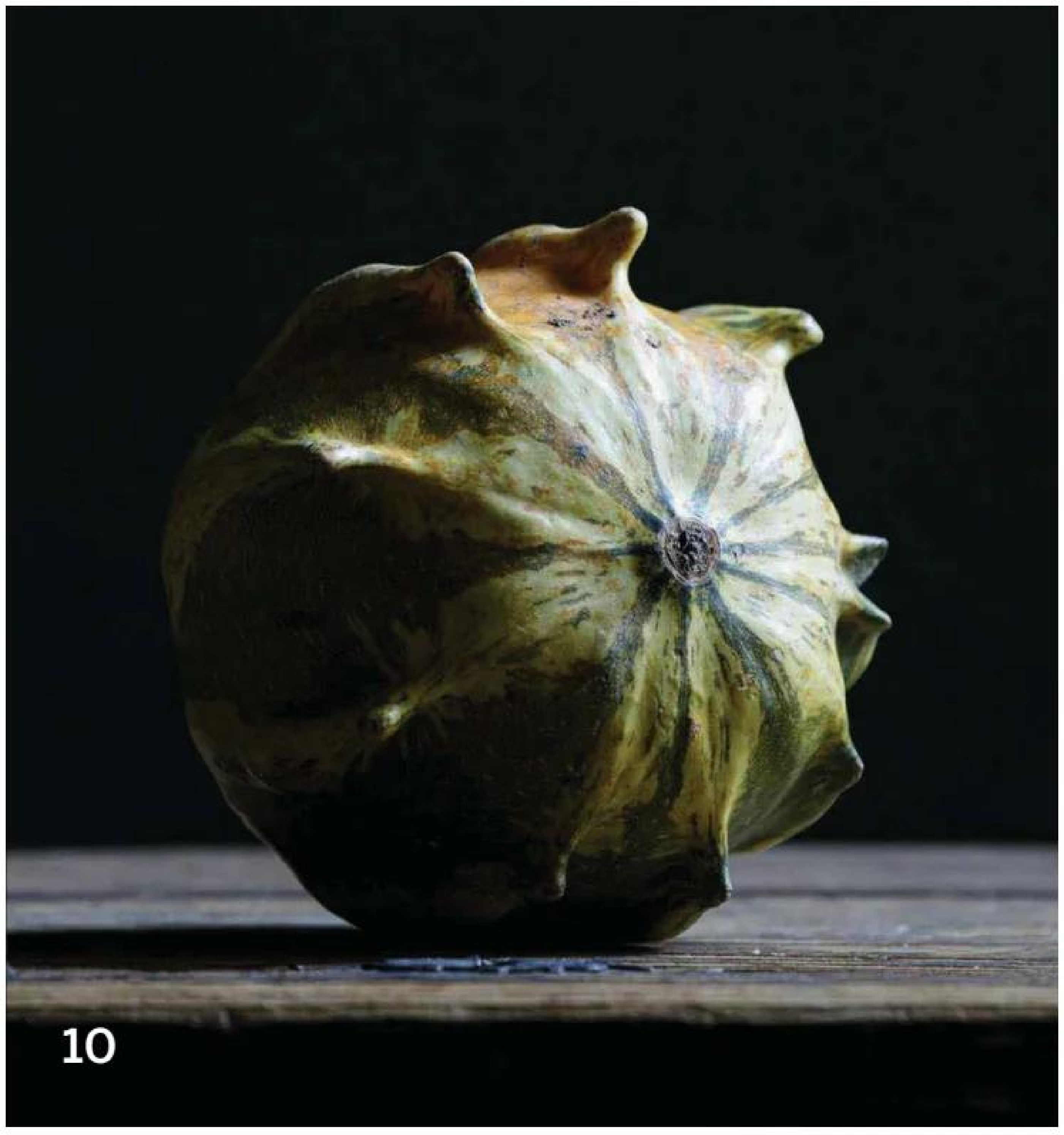

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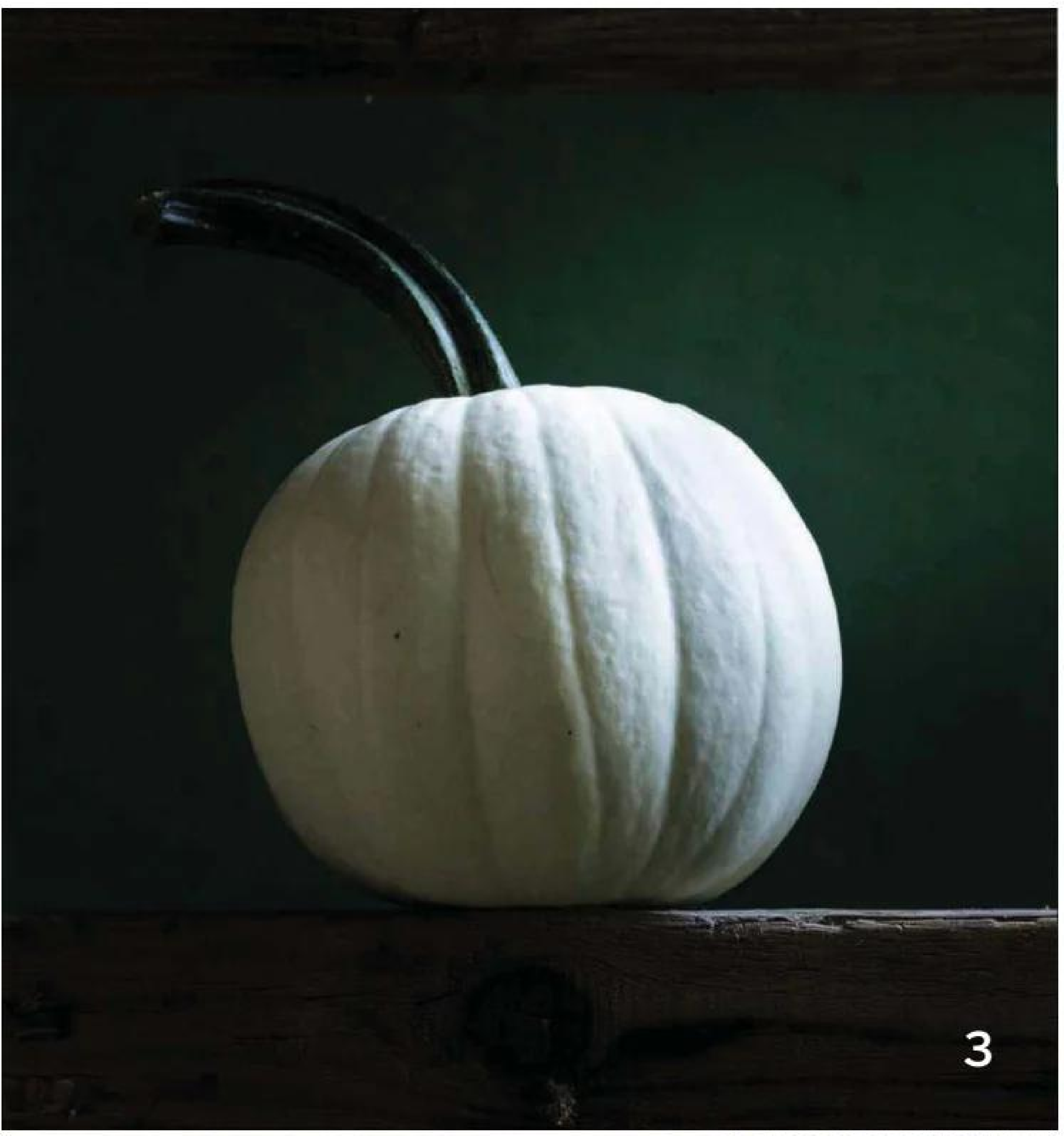
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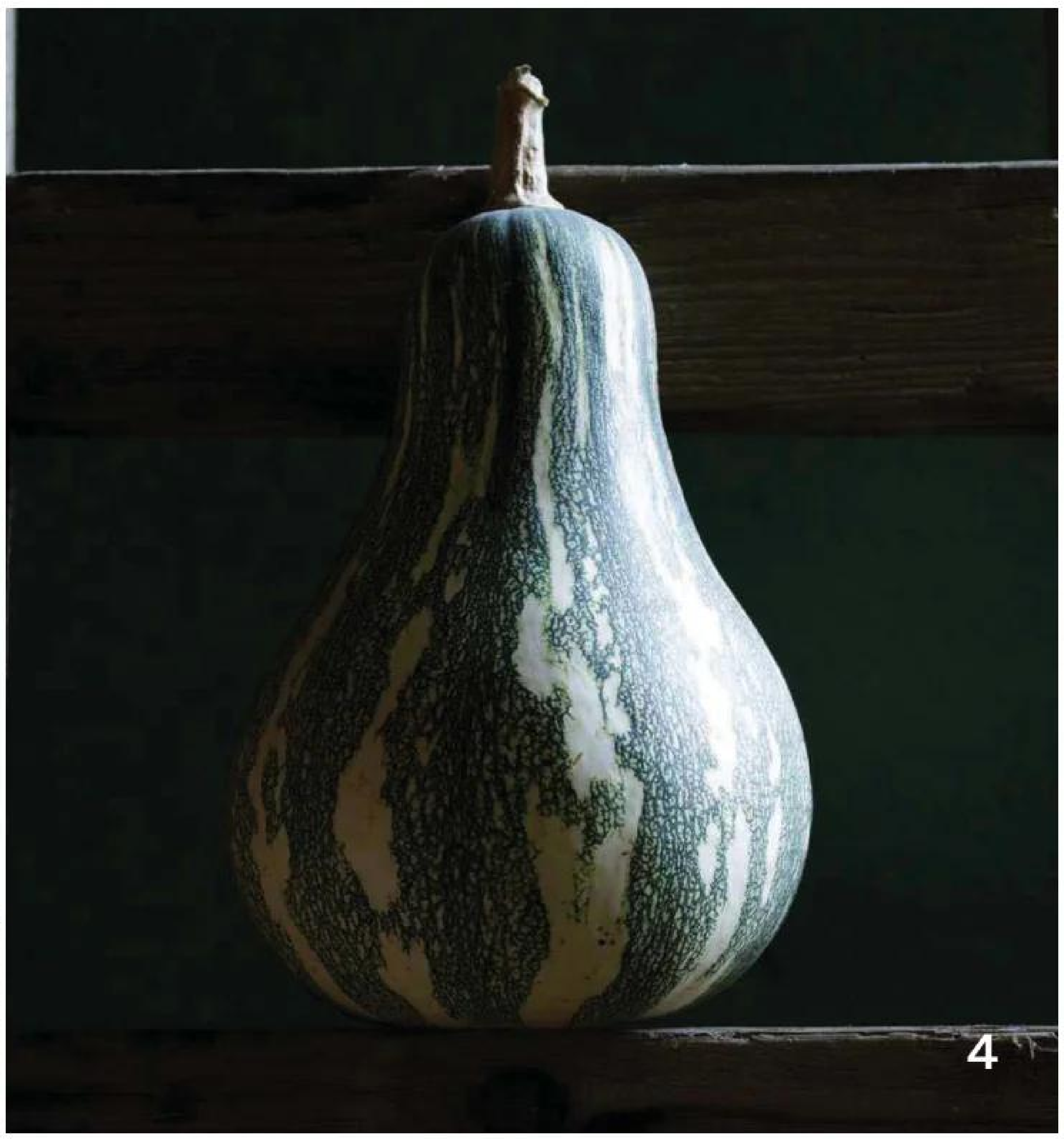
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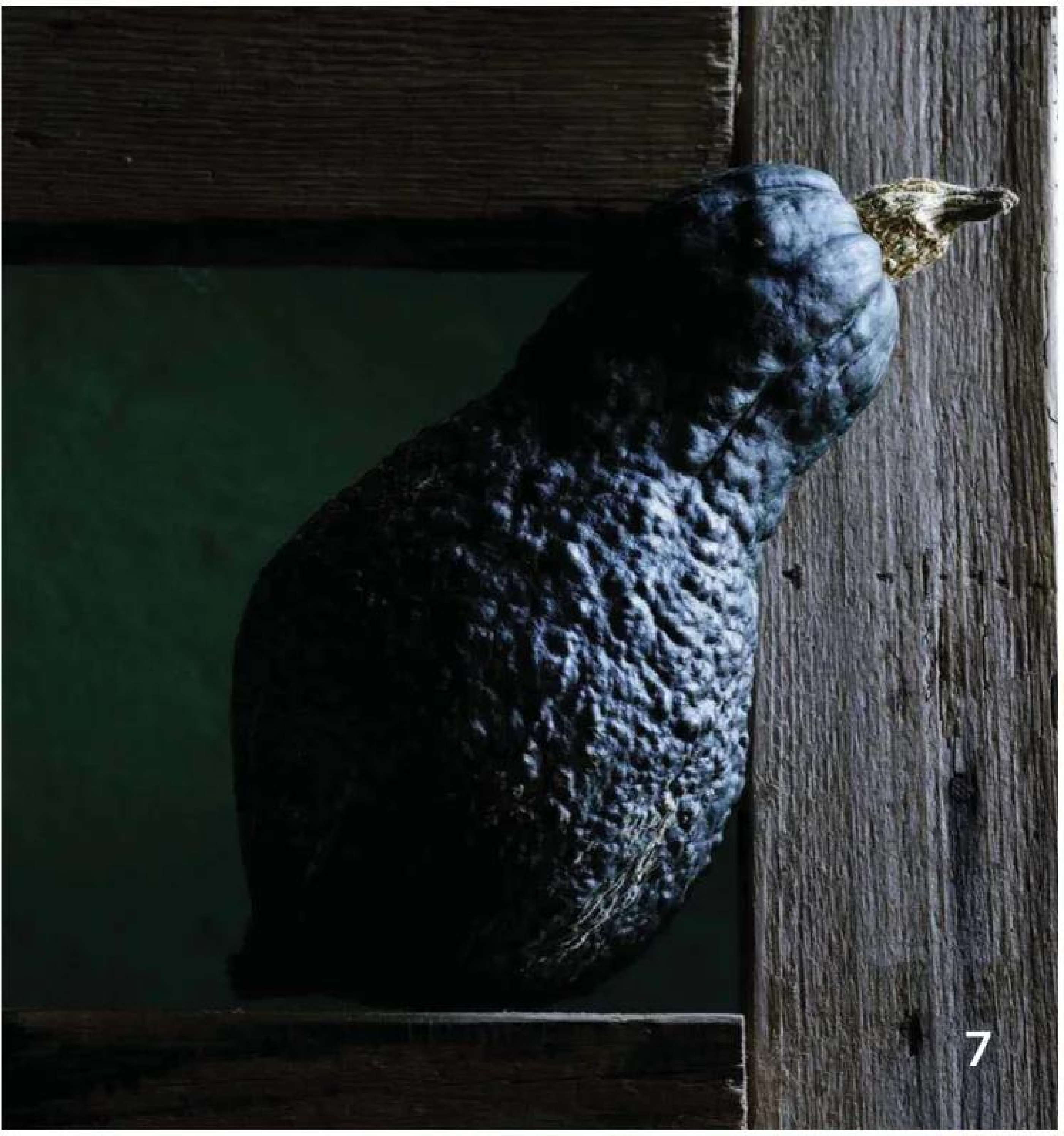
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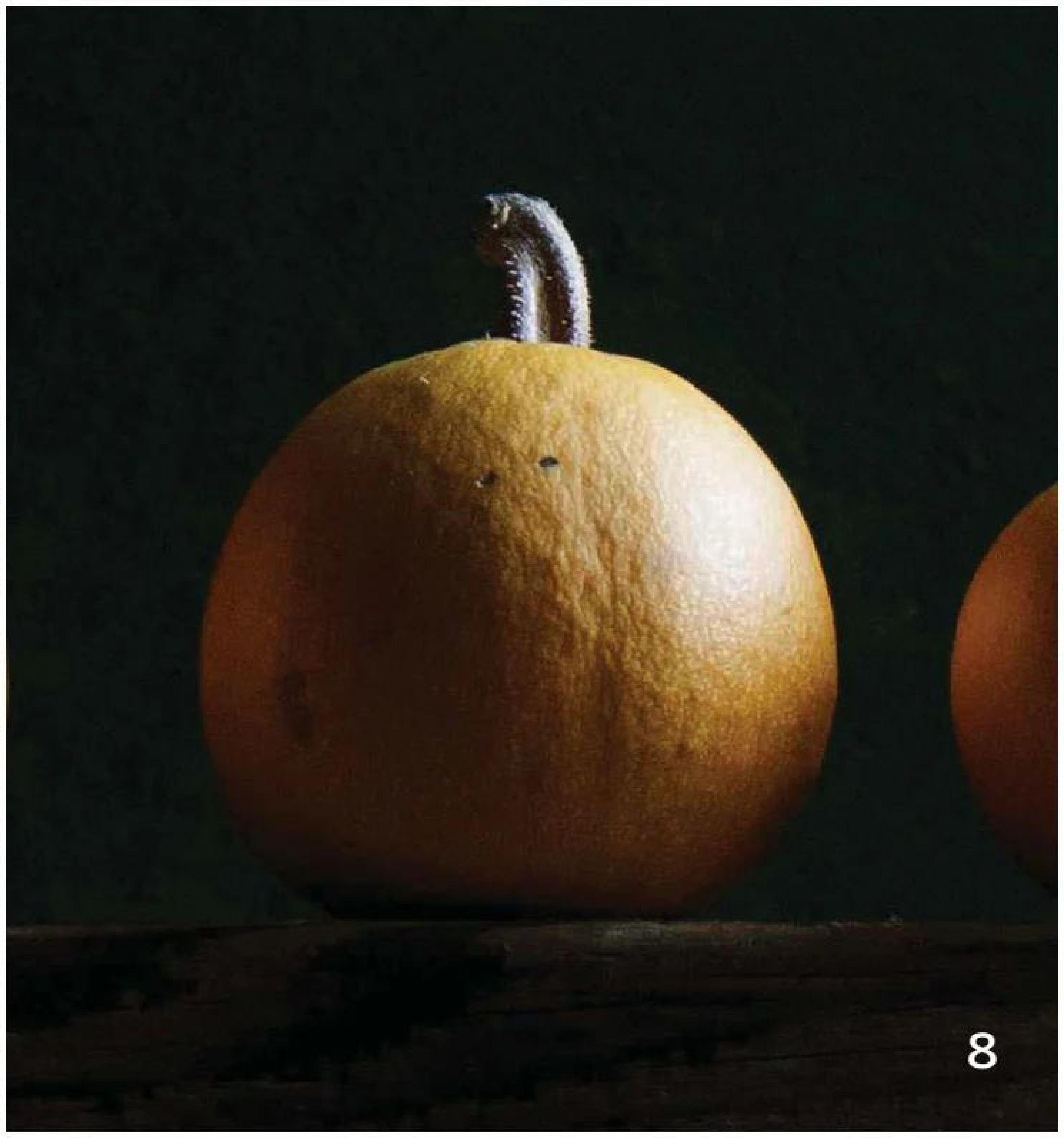
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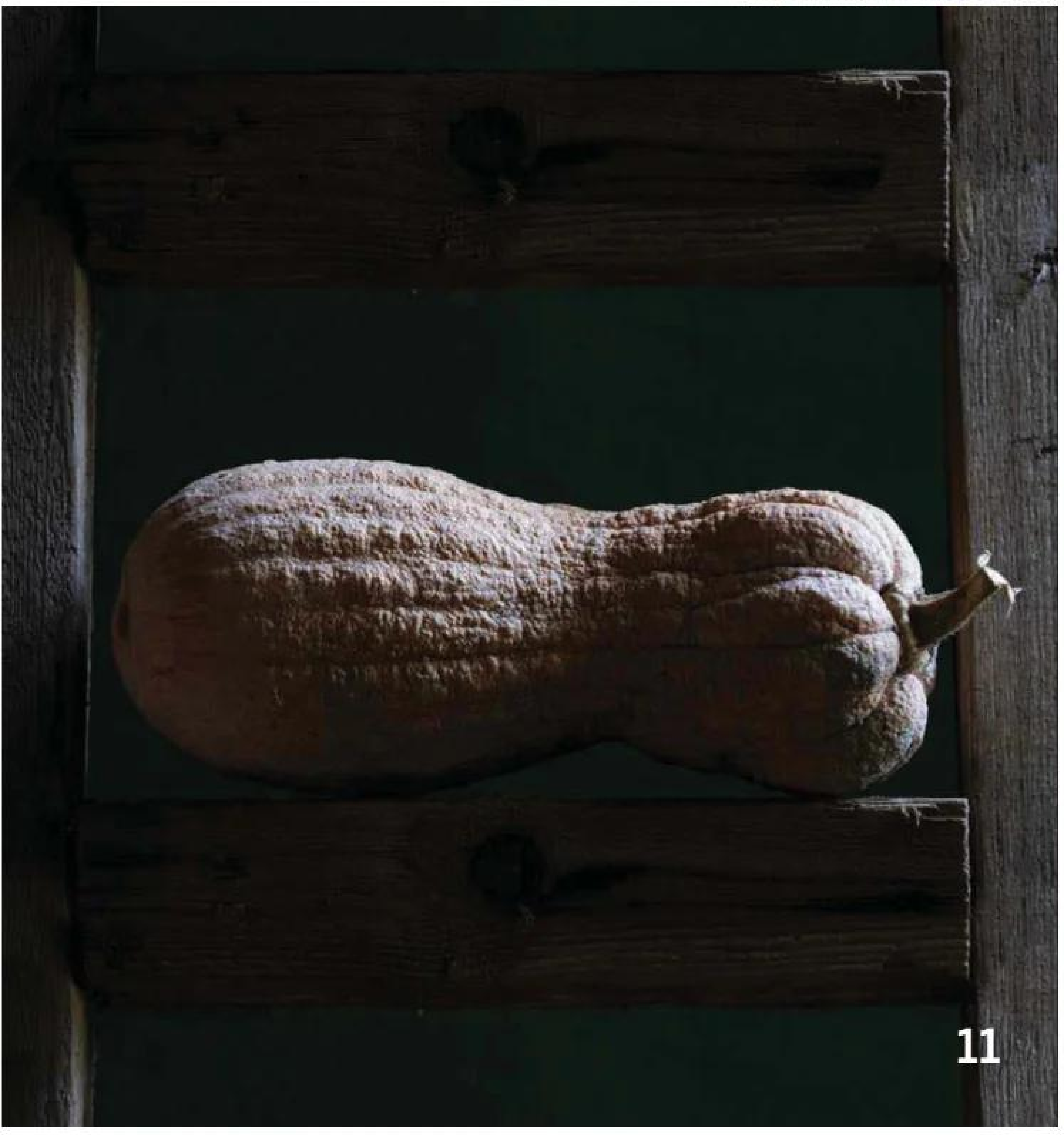
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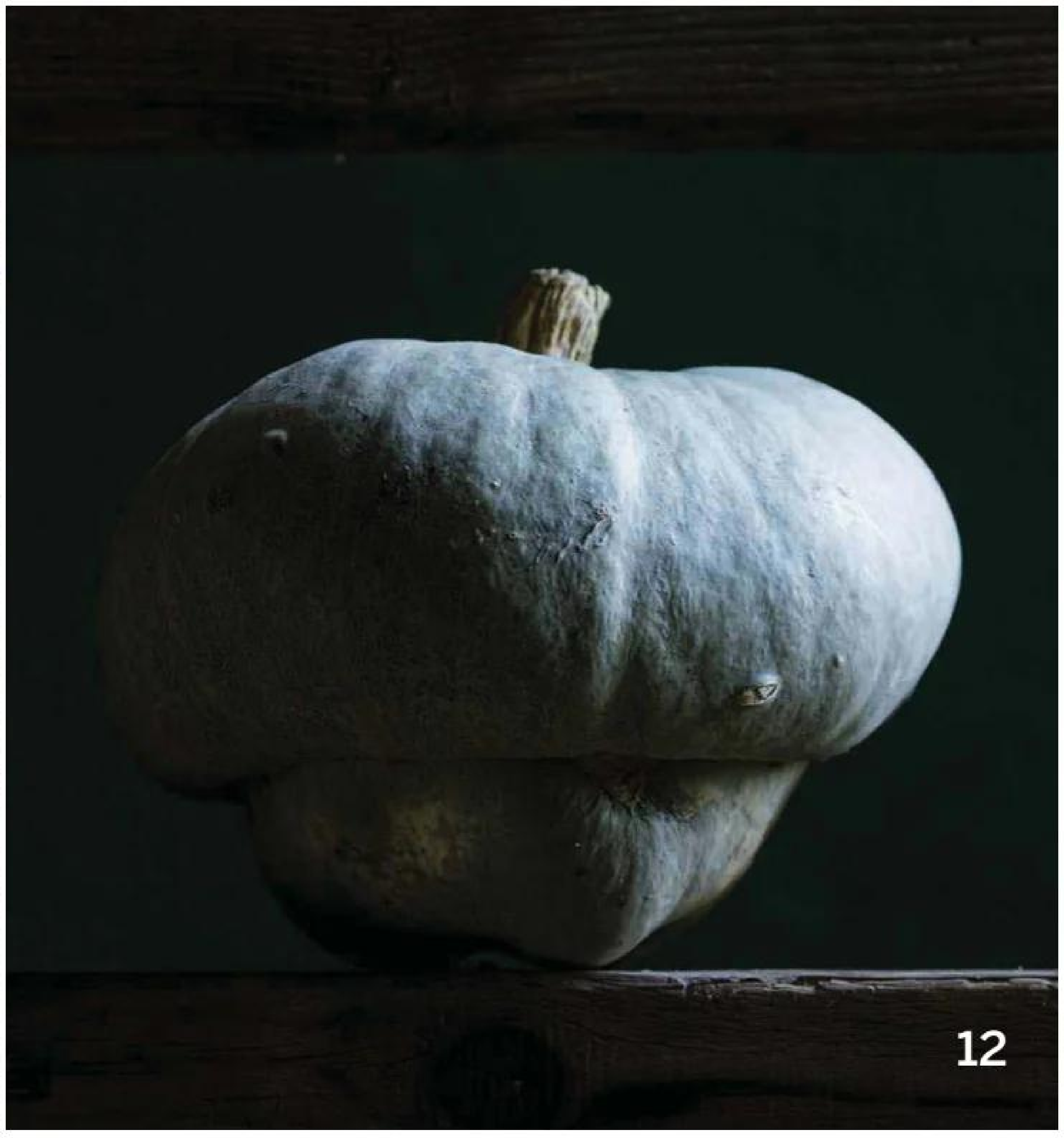
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8 'Pomme d'Or' Slightly larger than tennis balls, these pumpkins grow very well vertically and are perfect for children to draw and paint on. One plant can produce ten or more fruits. They last for months in cool, dry storage.

9 'Casperita' Slightly larger pumpkin than 'Baby Boo' but still fits in one hand. It is just large enough when carved to hold a little tea light.

10 'Crown of Thorns' Made to hold – there's nothing more oddly satisfying for the fingers than wrapping them around the bumps of this ornamental gourd – one finger between each ridge. You have to try it to see how good it feels.

11 'Violina Di Rugosa' An Italian heirloom pumpkin, a sort of wrinkled butternut that is hard to beat for taste and quality. The bumpier it is, the more tricky peeling can be, but baking and then peeling is always an option, and the entire neck and most of the body is flesh (not an empty cavity full of strings and seeds).

12 'Beretta Piacentina' The Italian provinces of Mantua and Piacenza both claim this heirloom pumpkin as their own because it is one of the best for baking. It is slowly being replaced by the F1 cultivar 'Delica', which is dark green, smaller, always sweet and easier to peel. Slice this very thin, fry until golden brown, sprinkle with salt, and you might agree with me: it is pumpkin perfection.

RECOMMENDED SEED SUPPLIERS

UK
- **Chiltern Seeds**
chilternseeds.co.uk
- **Kings Seeds**
kingsseeds.com
- **Sea Spring Seeds**
seaspringseeds.co.uk
- **Thompson & Morgan**
thompson-morgan.com

USA
- **Annie's Heirloom Seeds**
anniesheirloomseeds.com
- **Holmes Seed Company**
holmesseed.com

The garden is more interesting with little black-and-white pumpkins, peachy-pink ones covered in warts, bright-yellow carving pumpkins and lime-green gourds too

▷ translucent white blooms that last until early morning, more fragrant than the sweetest melon. Of the 15 or so cucurbit varieties I grow, my favourite for flowers appears in my pumpkin tunnel in August, poking out on stems from vines of the snake gourd (*Trichosanthes cucumerina*). They look like small, pure-white passion flowers.

By September, its fruits dangle down from the trellis like curly green serpents, ever-so-slightly fuzzy. There is nothing there to eat, but they are a treat for the fingers, a delight for the eyes and a surprise for the nose. Garden visitors take a whiff but seldom guess what those corkscrew fruits smell like until I suggest roasted peanuts, to which they usually laugh and agree – "Exactly, that's it!" The fruits brighten as they mature to orange and then red, which is when their seeds are viable – and worth collecting, as they come true year after year.

By the end of October, if left on the vine, they will start to turn slimy, but nothing goes to waste in my garden. Guests eat all the sweet pumpkins I grow and my goats, peacocks and chickens get the rest. If any gourds go squishy instead of drying, they are added to the compost, and I can recommend miniature goats as the ideal power tool for clearing an abandoned winter pumpkin patch. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Clark Lawrence runs Reading Retreats in Rural Italy, taking care of his guests, garden and goats at a restored pump house near Mantua, Italy. **lamacchinafissa.com**

A tableau of black gourds including 'Black Kat', 'Warts Galore' and 'American Wings'.

Top tips for growing cucurbits

- **To grow cucurbits, you should consider what they want, first.** They need a lot of sun, rich soil, water and a bit of wind to thrive. The biggest and best pumpkins are always those that grow out of control from a compost heap or near a chicken coop.

- **Plant indoor-sown seedlings out or sow seeds direct outside** when there is absolutely no danger of frost – for me, this is mid- to late April at the earliest, when the soil is likely to have warmed up. To slightly lower the chances of seeds rotting, I sow them standing up on their sides, not flat on their backs.

- **When fruits appear and start to weigh more than it seems their vines can bear,** provide support that allows water, light, and air to get to them: I use repurposed nets from supermarket lemons or make little swings for them to sit on, which encourages flat bottoms.

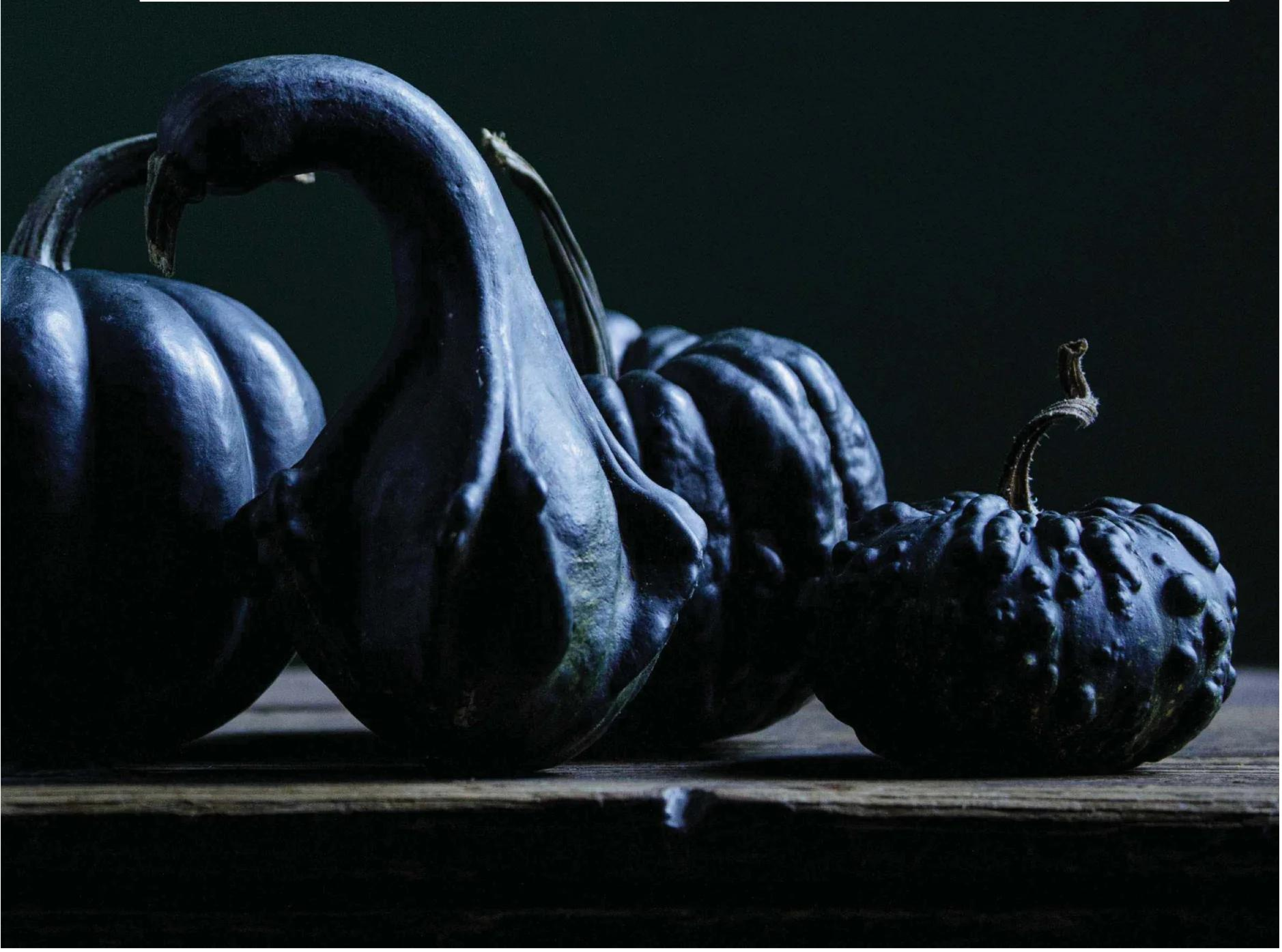
- **Pumpkins and decorative gourds should be ready to harvest** in late summer to early autumn. They need a week to ten days in the late summer sun to cure, and they can then be moved indoors to a safe location.

- **Try to prevent rainwater from collecting at the base of the stems** after they have been cut from the vine. Curing them on their sides and rolling them every few days can be helpful.

- **Store fruit in a cool, well-ventilated room**, and it's incredible how long some will last. I don't varnish my gourds but if mould starts to form on the surface in autumn or winter, I wipe them with a cloth dampened with diluted bleach.

- **Carved pumpkins don't last long.** Mould can begin to form in just a few days, and they attract fruit flies quickly. If you would like to make Jack-o-lanterns for Halloween, plan the carving as a day-before activity.

- **A carving tip for beginners**: when cutting the tops off pumpkins, always insert your knife at an angle so the lid doesn't drop into the empty space you hollow out.



Passing the baton

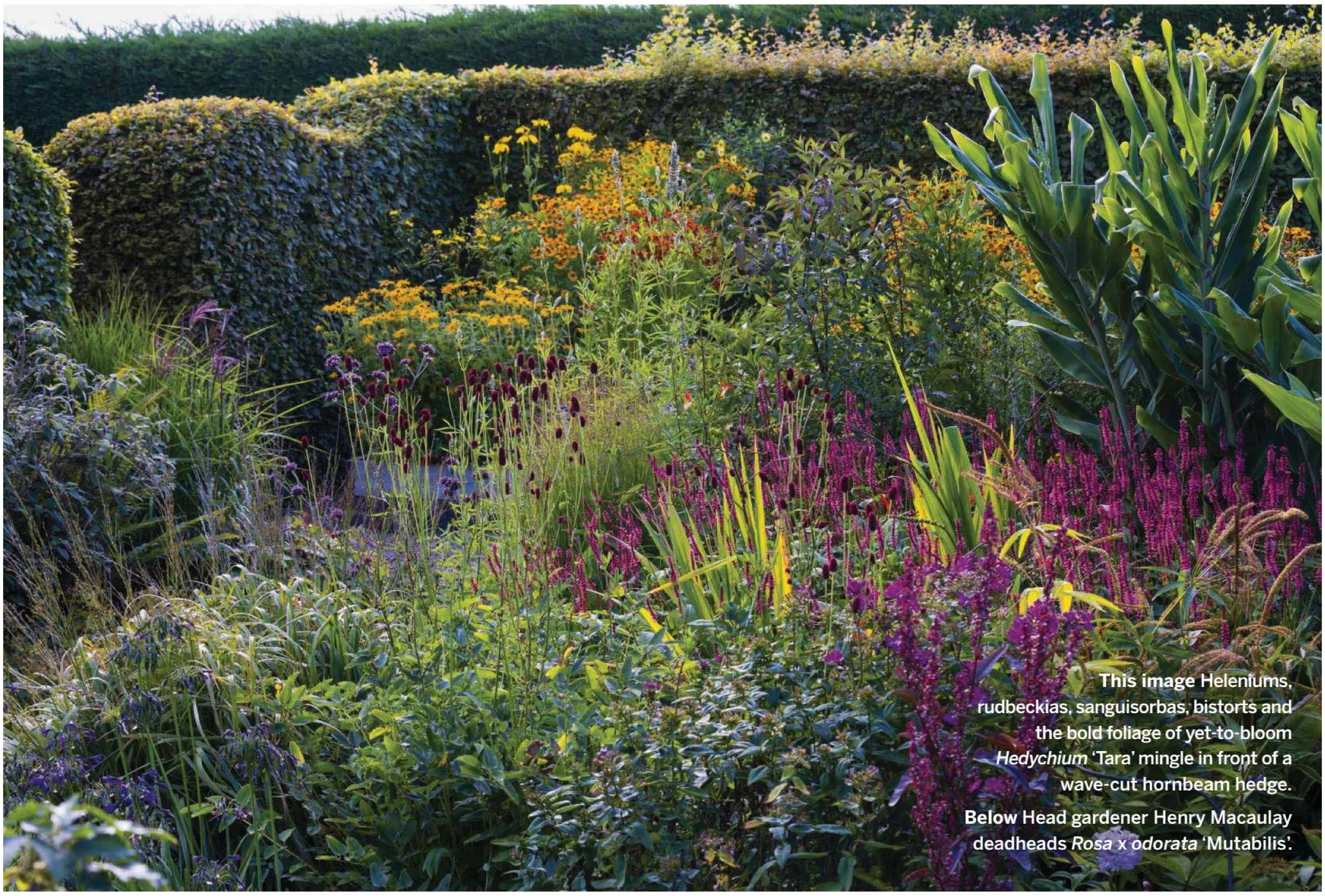
The celebrated nursery and garden at Marchants Hardy Plants in East Sussex is now being managed by a new team, who continue to inspire visitors with innovative planting

WORDS **PHIL CLAYTON** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

IN BRIEF

What Garden and nursery where all plants are propagated by hand from material collected in the garden.
Where East Sussex.
Size Garden of just over one acre in a site of around two-and-a-half acres.
Soil Heavy Wealden clay, slowly improved over the years with regular mulching.
Climate The site has a southerly aspect, with predominantly southwesterly winds.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

The garden, created by Graham Gough on a sloping site near Lewes in East Sussex, acts as both a display garden and a stock bed for the nursery. Enclosed by wave-cut hornbeam hedges, the beds are mounded to provide extra drama to tall plantings, such as the golden-awned grass *Stipa gigantea* and selection of different *Miscanthus* and *Pennisetum* that add grace and movement to a mix of richly coloured, mostly sun-loving perennials.



This image Heleniums, rudbeckias, sanguisorbas, bistorts and the bold foliage of yet-to-bloom *Hedychium* 'Tara' mingle in front of a wave-cut hornbeam hedge.

Below Head gardener Henry Macaulay deadheads *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis'.

> The garden is essentially a huge stock bed. If we add something, we ask first if it's actually a plant we want to sell

If you were to list nurseries that have influenced the way we garden, Marchants Hardy Plants would surely warrant mention. Selling a range of unfussy, unusual perennials – notably grasses – it helped pioneer a continental style of planting adopted, and adapted, by many UK gardeners.

The nursery's garden is the perfect shop window, fitting splendidly in the leafy South Downs setting. Structural, often wave-cut hornbeam hedges divide up the space, across which a dizzying array of mostly perennials weave and flow; fiery *Helenium* and *Rudbeckia* promenade with pastel asters, *Phlox* or inky-blue *Agapanthus*, while upright *Atriplex hortensis* var. *rubra* (purple orache) and *Verbena hastata* rise beside softly lush persicarias, all softened by swaying grasses such as *Pennisetum*, *Miscanthus* and *Ampelodesmos*.

Founder Graham Gough trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, but in 1982, after a transformative visit to Sissinghurst Castle garden, took a job with 'hellebore queen' Elizabeth Strangman at Washfield Nursery in Kent. In 1997, he and wife Lucy Goffin established Marchants on a sloping two-and-a-half-acre site in Laughton, not far from Lewes. He started work on a garden beside the small sales area, planting mostly sun-loving perennials that would thrive in the heavy clay soil, combined in a style influenced by the developing European perennial movement (it was via friendships made with growers across the continent that many plants were obtained).

Graham also started raising his own selections, notably of *Hylotelephium* (such as *H.* 'Marchants Best Red') and *Agapanthus*. Marchants went from strength to strength, selling quality stock all raised on-site, attracting plant fanatics and garden designers looking for a relaxed, natural look.

By 2022, however, it was time for a change. Graham and Lucy, while still living on-site, decided to take a back seat and handed the running of Marchants to a team of staff and volunteers headed by Hannah Fox, Henry Macaulay and nursery co-ordinator Jean Christy.

Hannah, who has been at Marchants for ten years, manages the nursery. "It felt daunting but exciting to take on one of the UK's best nurseries, but having worked with Graham, it meant it was like being handed the controls of a plane mid-air, rather than at take-off. Working in a team is great; we bounce ideas off each other and plants we grow have to justify inclusion to us all – they must ▷

The garden is the perfect shop window. Every year there is an edit to remove any underperforming plants, as they know it's vital to keep the garden fresh

A fine Caucasian ash tree (*Fraxinus angustifolia* subsp. *oxycarpa*) adds a focal point to the garden scheme of perennials and grasses, which includes brick-red spires of *Bistorta amplexicaulis* Taurus (= 'Blotau') in the foreground, and the dazzling sunshine-yellow of *Helenium* 'Riverton Beauty'.

As the garden slopes gently away from the nursery the planting becomes wilder, culminating in a meadow, and a pond. A row of hornbeams provide shelter.

▷ be the best of the best," she says. A wander around the polytunnels, standing areas and cold frames confirms this. The team still propagates everything – around 600 different plants – just as Graham did. They don't do mail order, as stock is "ready when it is ready". They have been using peat-free for four years, and the plants are grown hard to be tough.

The nursery areas include an attractive wooden shade house, with temptations including choice ferns such *Polypodium glycyrrhiza* 'Malahatense', dark-purple flowered *Geranium nodosum* 'Whiteleaf' and *Epimedium* 'Bieke', with constellations of starry yellow flowers in spring.

In the standing areas in late summer, stock of airy yellow-flowered *Patrinia punctiflora* and exotic *Hedychium* 'Tara', with its scented orange flower spikes, rub shoulders with various *Agapanthus*, such as shining 'Kew White' and two Marchants' specials: 'Quink Drops' with heads of drooping bells, and dark-blue 'Marchants Cobalt Cracker'.

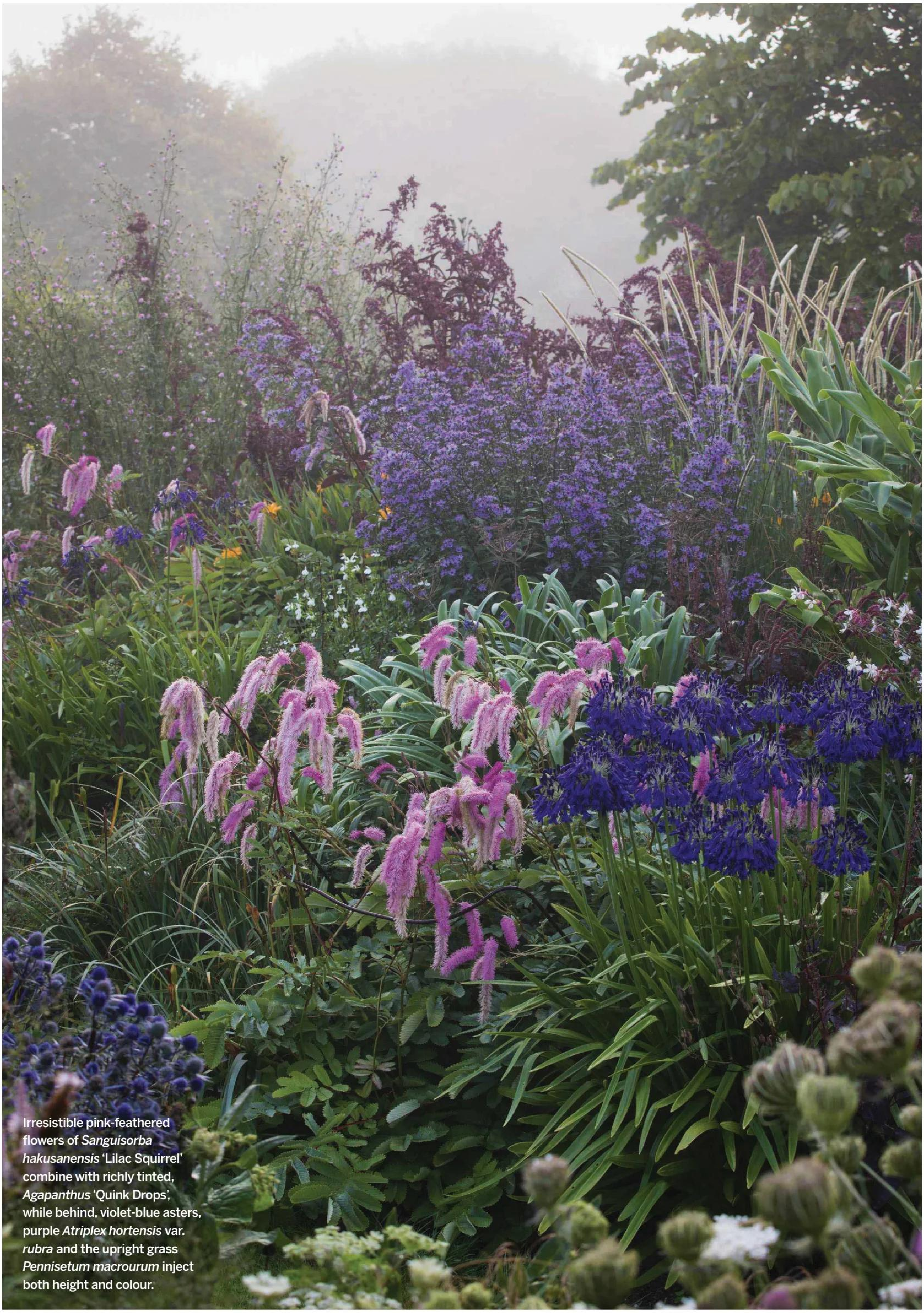
"It's key to sell what is popular," says Hannah. "We look at Instagram and websites of other nurseries and ask visiting plantspeople and designers what they are looking for. We're on clay, but there are chalky and sandy gardens nearby and this is a windy part of the world, so resilience is vital. Plants we sell must thrive. Customers tend to want a natural or meadow effect – we don't get the bedding plant brigade here."

Henry Macaulay, the head gardener, came to Marchants in 2020 after time working at Parham House and with Sarah Raven. He looks after 1,600 taxa here. "The nursery's ethos, as established by Graham, has not changed. The garden, although beautiful, is essentially a huge stock bed. It has a symbiotic relationship with the nursery – if we add something, we ask first if it's actually a plant we want to sell," he explains.

Every year there is an edit to remove any underperforming plants, as they know it's vital to keep the garden fresh. "We also have to make sure each plant is easy to propagate and aesthetically different. In the garden, plants are not really grown in drifts, as they need to be separated for the best, strongest growth. We go for contrast rather than en-masse effects," he says.

The mix comprises around 20 per cent grasses, which bring movement to this breezy site, as well as long-lasting beauty – most are left standing over winter. They range from giant *Arundo donax* to this year's 'must-have' plant, *Melica ciliata*, ▷

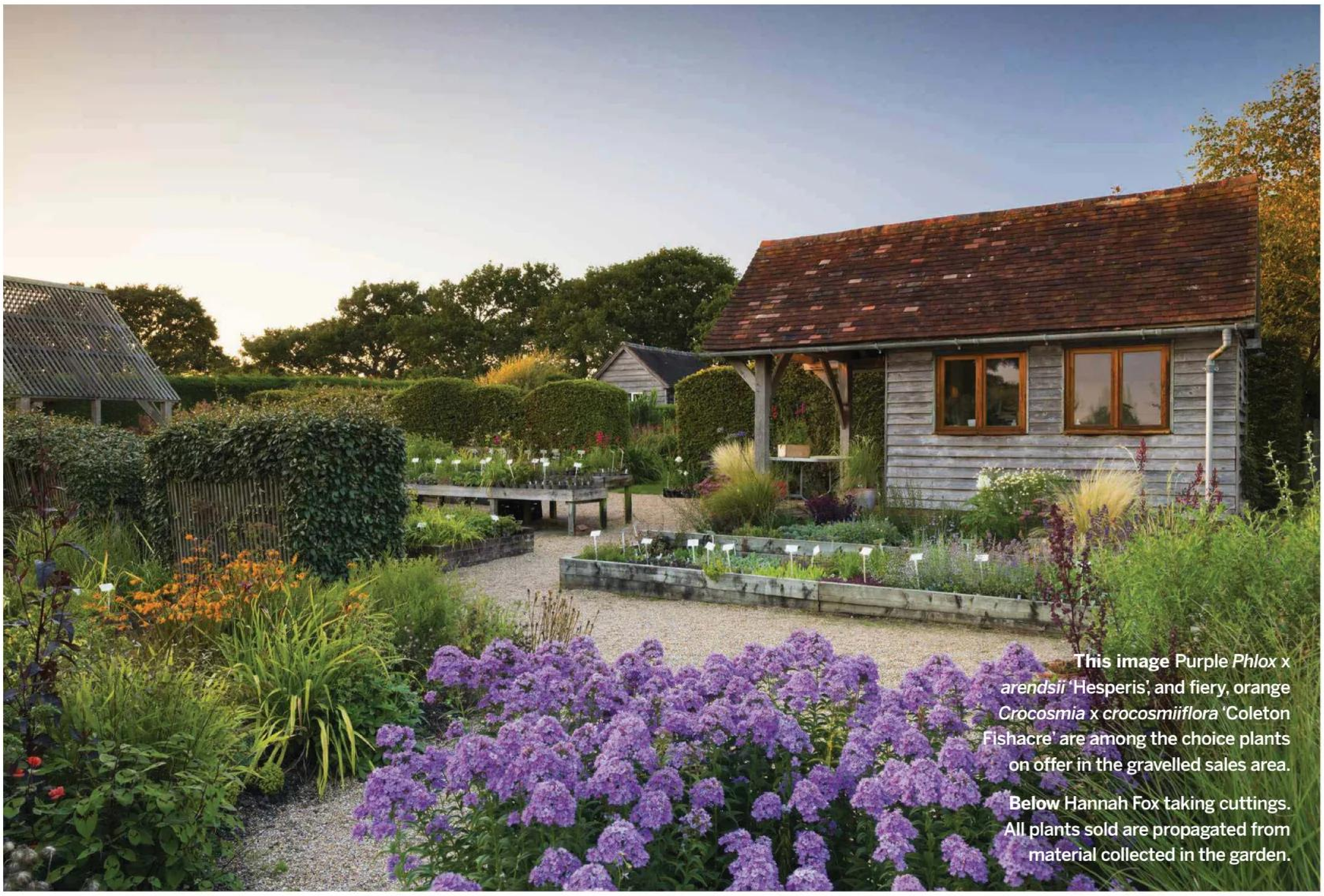
> We have to make sure each plant is easy to propagate and aesthetically different. In the garden, plants are not grown in drifts, as they need to be separated for the best, strongest growth



Irresistible pink-feathered flowers of *Sanguisorba hakusanensis* 'Lilac Squirrel' combine with richly tinted, *Agapanthus* 'Quink Drops', while behind, violet-blue asters, purple *Atriplex hortensis* var. *rubra* and the upright grass *Pennisetum macrourum* inject both height and colour.

We look at Instagram and websites of other nurseries and ask visiting plantspeople and designers what they are looking for

Marchants' nursery sales beds, surrounded by borders featuring superb sun-loving grass *Stipa pseudoichu*, with its graceful, slender flower panicles, and golden-yellow *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'.



This image Purple *Phlox* x *arendsii* 'Hesperis', and fiery, orange *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Coleton Fishacre' are among the choice plants on offer in the gravelled sales area.

Below Hannah Fox taking cuttings. All plants sold are propagated from material collected in the garden.

▷ seen in seemingly every garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. It is popular with customers, thriving in sun or shade and looking great for months.

The garden's irregularly shaped beds are mounded for aesthetic and practical reasons – lifting plants up makes them easier to see and propagate, which provides valuable drainage above the heavy clay. Everywhere you look there are desirable plants, such as *Sanguisorba hakusanensis* 'Lilac Squirrel', which Henry describes as the "Ken Dodd of the plant world" for its feathery, pink dusters of flowers; *Eryngium pandanifolium,* with arching leaves and towering flower stalks; and *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis', with its fluttering pink-and-apricot flowers over a long season. *Silphium mohrii* stands out with branching stems of soft-yellow daisy heads, while *Gladiolus* 'Ruby', with its hooded, raspberry-coloured blooms, grows ridiculously well on the heavy clay.

The increasingly erratic climate is creating challenges that are shaping the direction that both the garden and nursery are heading in. This year, polytunnels at the top of the site flooded, and the increased rain encouraged slugs and snails, causing damage to the extent that bold annual *Persicaria orientalis* (kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate) was virtually wiped out. Henry even had to lift some asters to keep them alive. In dry summers, the soil develops cracks "like the Grand Canyon," says Henry, making watering hard. The team has noticed that *Phlox, Veronicastrum* and *Bistorta* now struggle. "Ten years ago, we might have recommended customers plant these in full sun," says Hannah, "but now that's a risk. Plants we sell have to do well – if that means we can't stock *Monarda*, so be it."

Henry can still point to winners, however. *Sphaeralcea incana* 'Sourup', a sort of mallow with orange flowers, thrives in dry conditions, and magenta-pink *Lythrum salicaria* tolerates both wet and dry conditions. So it seems Marchants has passed to the safest of hands, well able to grasp and adapt to new challenges. The sound ethos put in place from the start means change is about evolution not revolution, with the new team providing both succession and continuity – vital concepts in business and gardening alike. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Marchants Hardy Plants, 2 Marchants Cottages, Mill Lane, Laughton, East Sussex BN8 6AJ. **Tel** 07942 385673. **Web** marchantshardyplants.co.uk **Open** April to mid-October, Thursday – Saturday, 10am-5pm. Admission to the garden is £5.

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Design

News, garden design insight and sourcebook

Northern light

A new Mediterranean-style garden designed by Andy Sturgeon has opened at The National Trust's Beningbrough Hall near York. Evoking a southern European hillside, the design has breathed new life into an underused area of the garden. Thousands of plants have been chosen for their resilience to the extremes of heat and wet we can expect from a changing climate and will boost biodiversity in the space.

Many of the species chosen feature on the RHS Plants for Pollinators list, including *Ozothamnus rosmarinifolius* 'Silver Jubilee', *Kniphofia* 'Tawny King' and *Stipa gigantea*. A series of low walls made from local York stone have been incorporated, as well as boulders dotted throughout the space and water bowls containing miniature lilies.

Andy has been working with the Trust since 2016 to rejuvenate and reinvent the gardens at Beningbrough Hall, and the opening of this area marks the largest phase to be completed yet.

nationaltrust.org.uk

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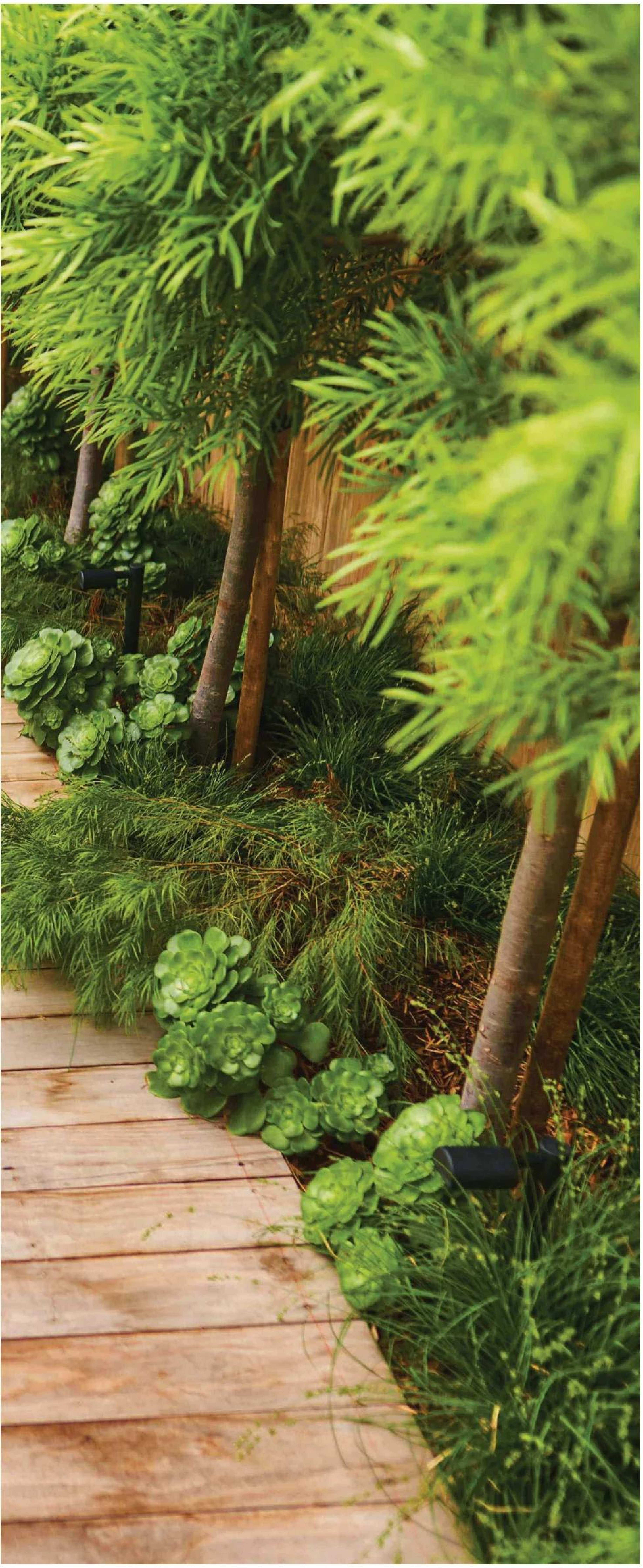


FRIENDLY ADVICE

When tasked with creating a garden for her friends, designer Neive Tierney found the project came with challenges – not least the need to include a wheelchair ramp and squeeze in a saltwater swimming pool

WORDS VERONICA PEERLESS PHOTOGRAPHS CLAYTON BOYD

The brief

This small garden in Los Angeles presented several challenges for designer Neive Tierney of Nectar Landscape Design. Among the problems she needed to solve was the fact that the floors of the home were much higher than the grade of the garden, and a significant part of the garden was taken up with a guest house that had been converted from a garage. The space needed to incorporate a saltwater pool and hot tub, while including plenty of space for entertaining and parties. It also needed be fully accessible for one of the owners, Sasha, who uses a wheelchair – without incorporating any 'ugly' mobility equipment.

Neive is an old college friend of Sasha and her wife Rachel, and she worked on the project during the evenings after work, before setting up on her own. "The project was very special, because I knew Sasha and Rachel well, and I knew what they wanted," says Neive. "I wanted to create different hangout spaces and some green areas, with the idea that everything could be ADA [American Disability Association] accessible. My biggest challenge was avoiding it looking like a concrete jungle."

The design

The L-shaped garden comprises two main areas: the decked seating area (approximately 9m x 6m), which is between the master bedroom and the guest house, and the pool garden (around 18m x 9m), which is overlooked by the dining area above.

A long concrete ramp runs from the dining area to the pool and hot tub area – the view of which is concealed by the statement wall of the pool – and the equipment, which is hidden by a fence. A boardwalk runs between the two main areas and along one side of the pool.

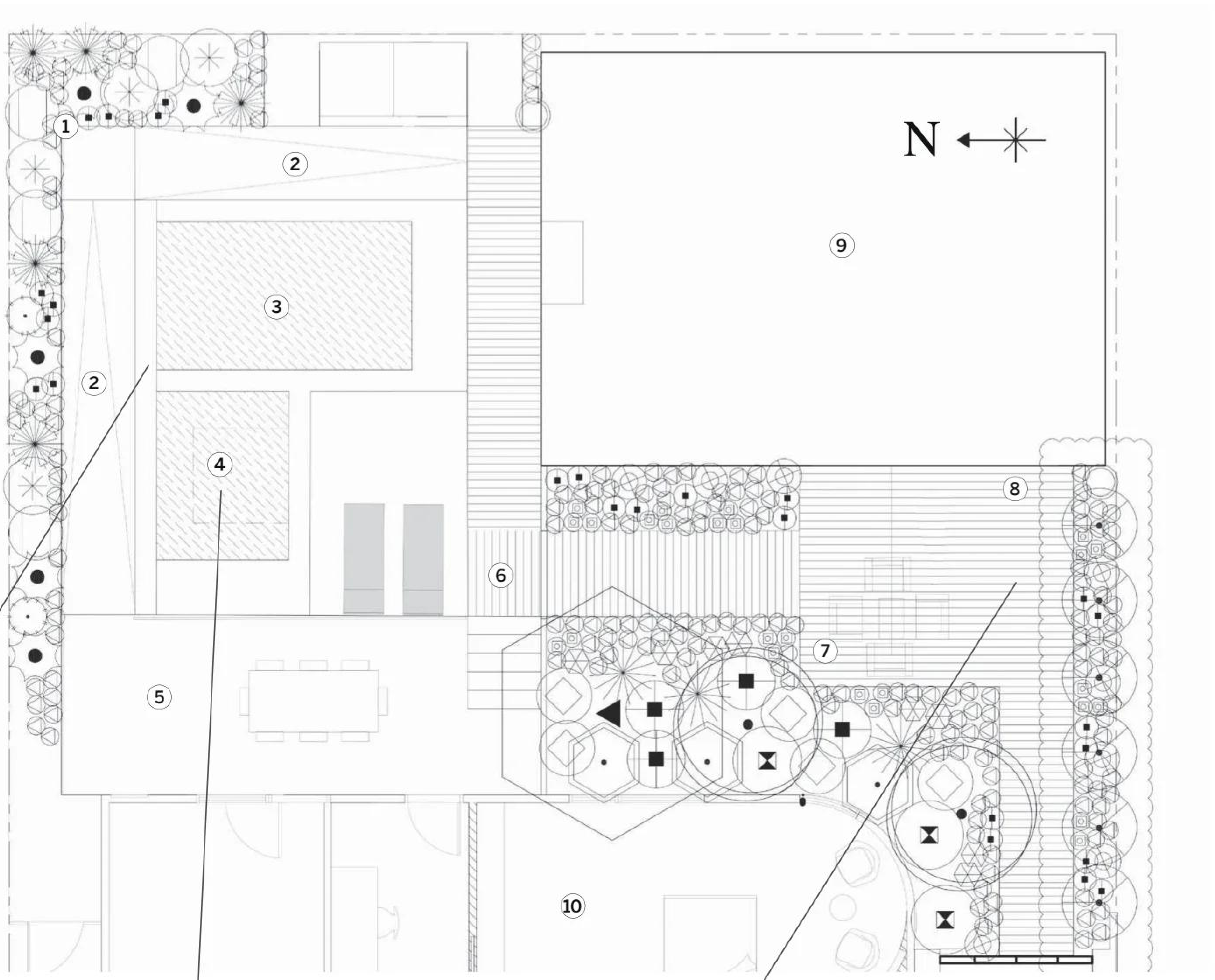
"I get to go back to the garden as Sasha and Rachel are my friends, which is fun," says Neive. "I can see just how much they enjoy it and how many people get to use it. I've seen so many people fit in that pool, and the hot tub, which is perfect for them, as they host a lot of parties. It's very rewarding that it has turned out so well."

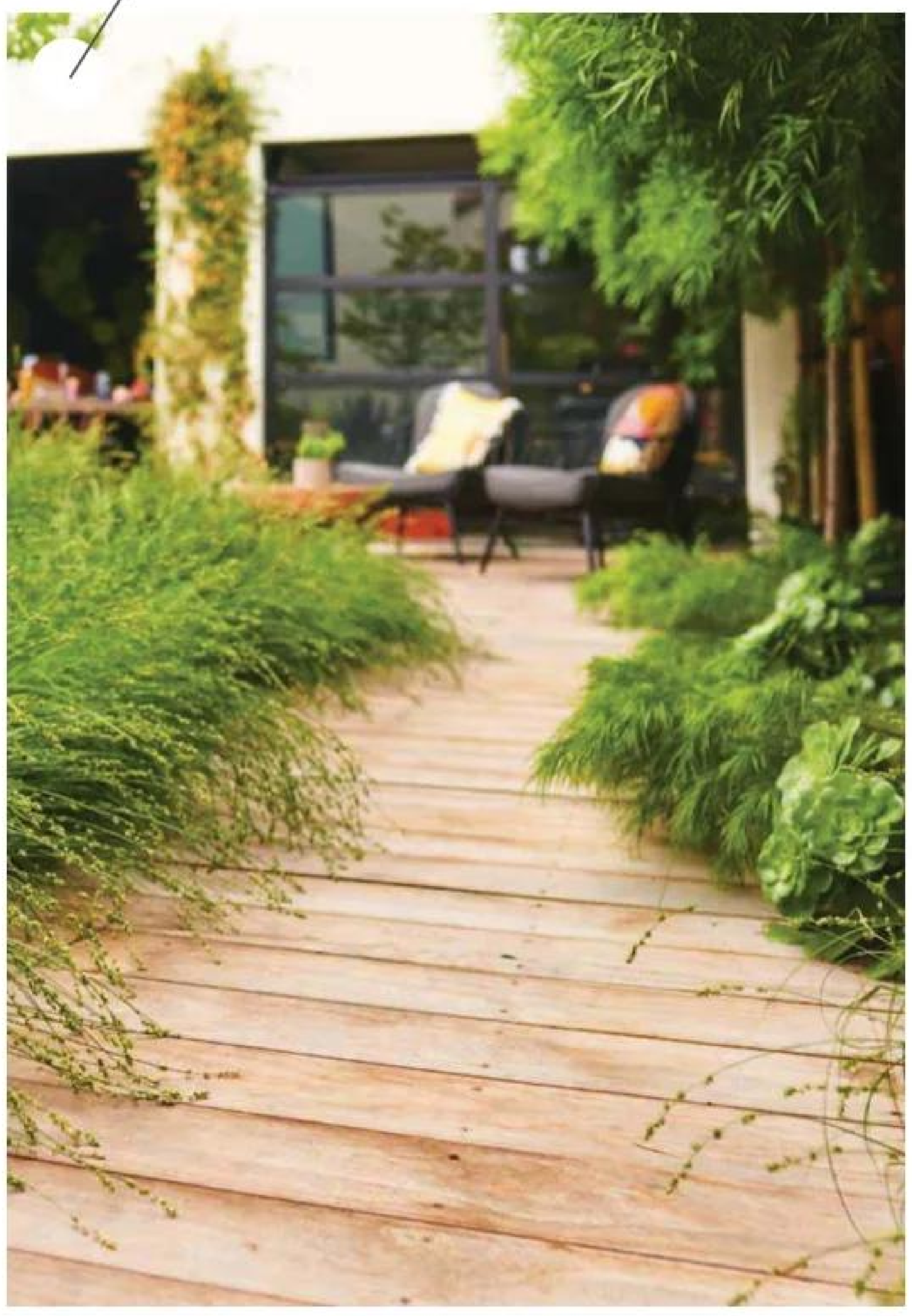
Turn the page for more design ideas ▷

Left In the garden between the bedroom and guest house, a western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) is underplanted with *Carex divulsa*, *Salvia clevelandii* and *Agave tequilana*. The more shady border, on the right-hand side of the boardwalk features evergreen *Afrocarpus gracilior*, underplanted with *Aeonium* 'Mint Saucer' *Carex divulsa* and *Acacia cognata* Cousin Itt (= 'ACCOG01').

Essential elements

1 Pool garden
2 Ramp
3 Saltwater pool
4 Hot tub
5 Dining terrace
6 Boardwalk
7 Bedroom garden
8 Guest-house garden
9 Guest house
10 Main house

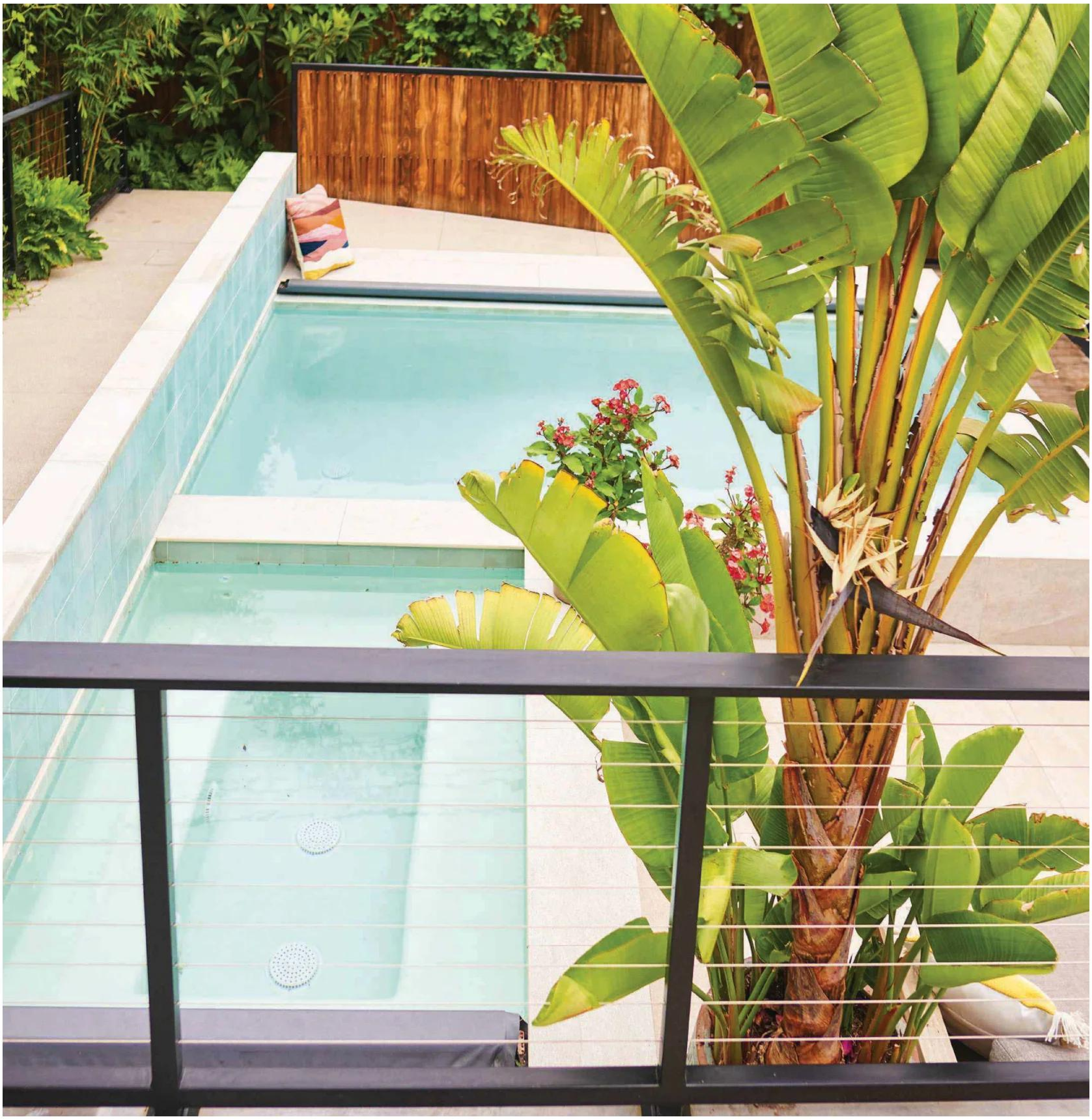




COLOUR POP
The saltwater pool is small (only 4.5m x 1.8m), just big enough for a person to do short laps, but it occupies much of the space in front of the dining terrace. Along one side, Neive has installed an attractive tiled wall. "It gives a pop of colour and helps to block the view of the ramp," she says. "You can also hold on to it if you're in the water." The tiles are ceramic, and were sourced from Eco Outdoor, an Australian brand that's popular in LA.

SALTWATER SENSATION
Floating in warm water is beneficial for Sasha's back. Saltwater is also supposed to be kinder to skin and contains fewer chemicals than a chlorine pool. However, it can take its toll on the material used to line the pool and hot tub area. "I talked to so many people," says Neive. "Some said to use concrete, others said stone. In the end I used a Firenze Design Stones' porcelain tile, which looks like stone."

BRILLIANT BOARDWALK
"I wanted to include a boardwalk feel, explains Neive. "I knew that Sasha loves going to National Parks with these, and I really wanted that feeling of floating above the plants." She used Kebony (FSC-certified Monterey Pine, treated with a bio-based liquid for durability). "It's one of my favourite aspects of the garden," she says. "It's easy for Sasha to move around on, feels nice to walk on and is really pretty."



The hard landscaping

The garden was constructed by Dirty Girl Construction, a design and build company that had also reconfigured the interior of the house, during the Covid outbreak. At the eleventh hour, Neive realised that the as-built plan with elevation information was incorrect and the house was actually a few centimetres higher than the team originally thought. "Every inch of height difference requires an extra lateral foot of ramp, so four inches turns into four feet and makes a huge difference in such a tiny garden."

Neive had to quickly redesign the layout of the garden so that the concrete ramp would be long enough to allow for this extra height. This required switching the orientation of the pool and moving the outdoor dining to the upper level terrace. The ramp is now 15m long. "In California, a private home does not need to be ADA compliant, but the ramp is the standard 12:1 that would be needed in a public one," she says.

The redesign presented Neive with an additional problem in that the new orientation of the pool meant losing a much-needed tree. "It's so hot and sunny in LA," she says. "If I could change anything, it would be that the garden could use more shade. In the original design, there was a tree in the seating area below. After the redesign, it was a little too tight to stick a tree in the pool area; it would have gotten messy."

The bench around the pool is 45cm high, which is the height of Sasha's wheelchair. "Sasha can lift herself over the bench without using any special equipment," explains Neive. "I knew it would work, because I know how strong she is. The bench wall is all that's between the pool and the hot tub, so Sasha can slide over from one side to the other without having to get out." The bench combined with a nearby sofa from Teak Warehouse (see page 96) creates a seating area – perfect for entertaining.

Turn the page for planting ideas ▷

The planting

There are two main planting zones in the garden – the garden between the master bedroom and the guest house, which provides privacy as well as a leafy view from the bedroom window, and the area known as the pool garden.

The generous planting under the bedroom window, includes two *Cercis occidentalis* and a desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*). These trees, chosen for their seasonal blooms, are underplanted with sunset manzanita (*Arctostaphylos hookeri* x *A. pajaroensis* 'Sunset'), the tough evergreen sedge *Carex divulsa*, two agaves (*Agave tequilana* and *A. parryi* var. *truncata*), *Muhlenbergia rigens*, *Echeveria colorata* 'Mexican Giant' and *Salvia* 'Bee's Bliss'.

"Sasha is really into aromatic plants," says Neive. "So I planted some *Lavandula dentata* and pelargoniums here, too." Since then the couple has also planted an apricot tree, which Neive says gives the area "a lovely tunnel feel".

Outside the guest house, the planting echoes the other areas, but with plants that can take a little more

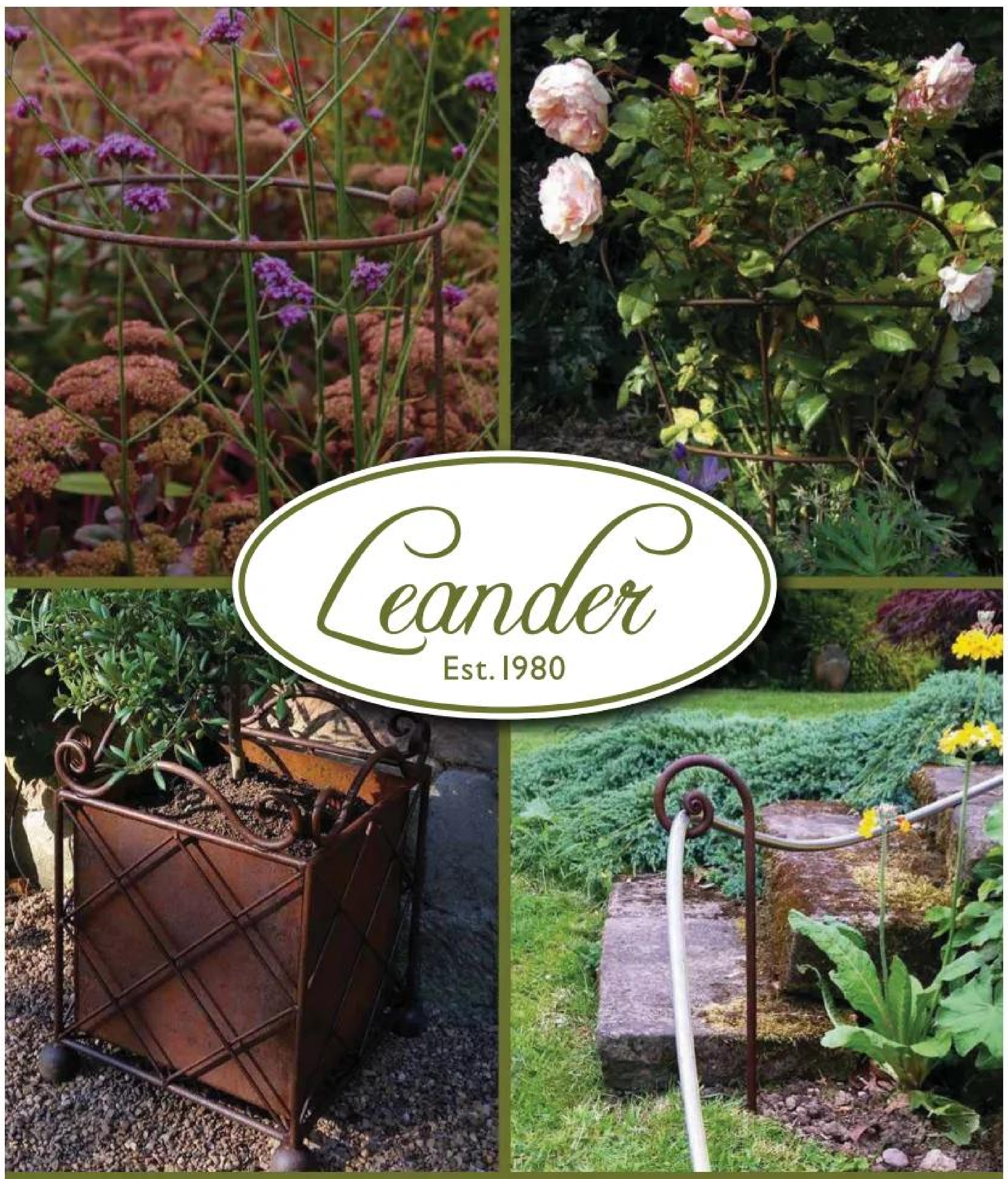
GUEST-HOUSE GARDEN

shade, such as *Aeonium* 'Mint Saucer', *Echeveria*, more *Carex divulsa*, plus the lady slipper plant (*Euphorbia lomelii*) and *Jasminum polyanthum*.

Around the pool, the planting also has an extremely lush feel, with plenty of evergreen plants, including broad-leaved *Monstera deliciosa*, the giant chain fern *Woodwardia fimbriata*, *Carex divulsa*, everblooming gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*), and the aptly named *Acacia cognata* Cousin Itt (= 'ACCOG01'), with highly fragrant Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) covering the walls.

The planting settled in well, but to Neive's surprise, some of the agaves grew very fast and became too large for the space. "We had to move some of the larger agaves to the front garden once Sasha and Rachel had a child. For a small child, they were getting dangerous," says Neive. "It's amazing how plants decide to grow in different properties." □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Neive Tierney's work at **nectarlandscape.com**



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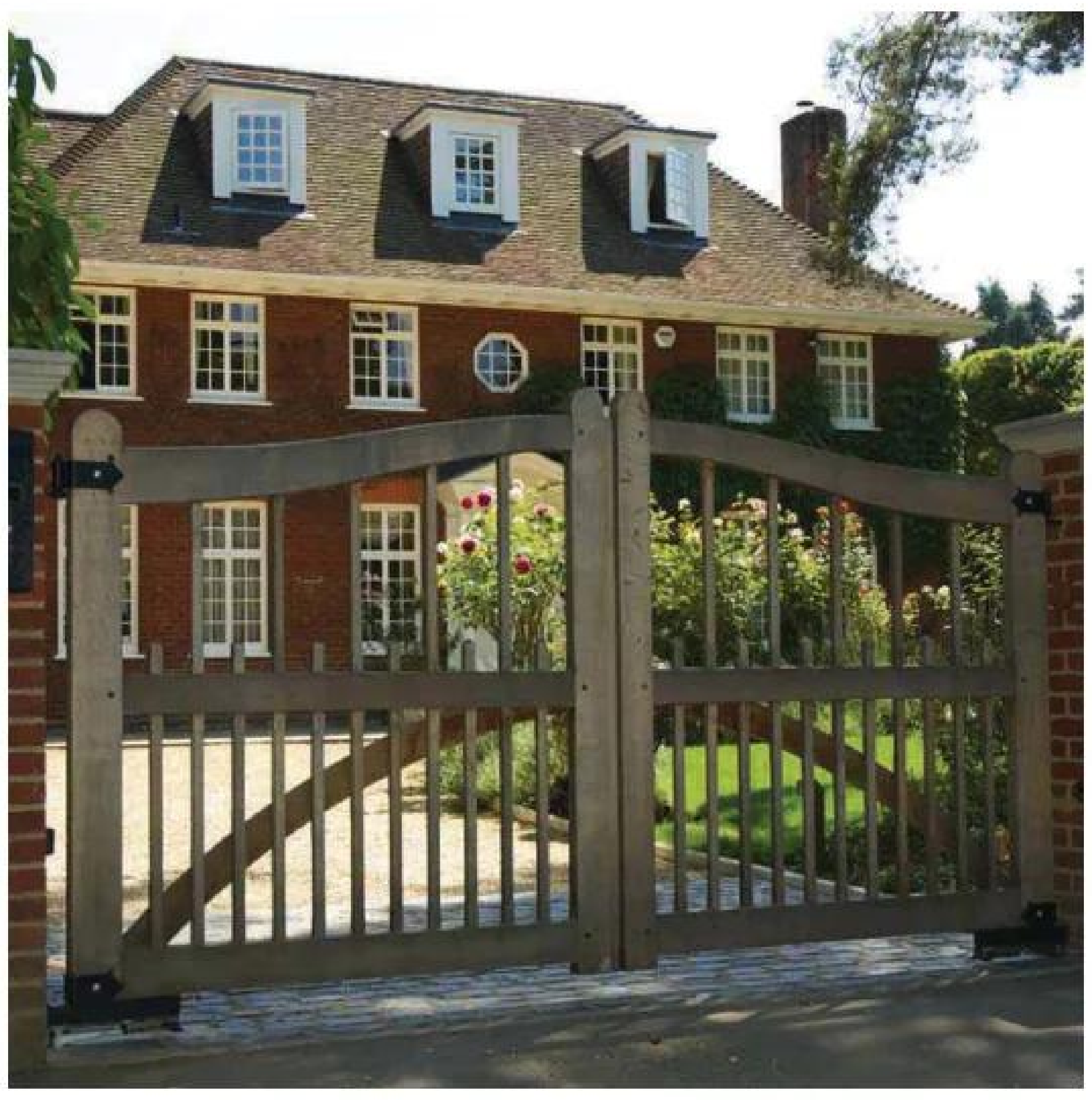

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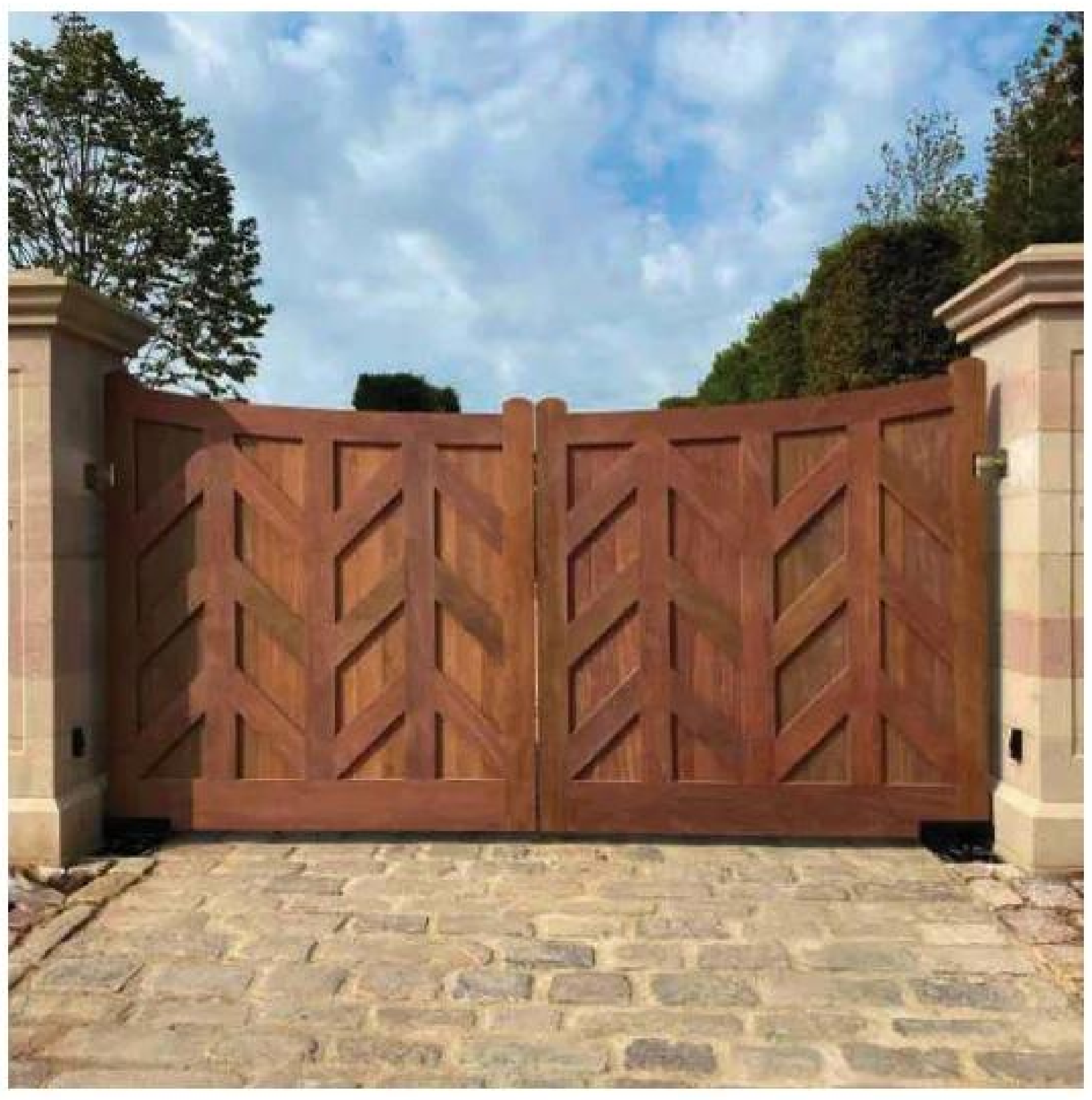

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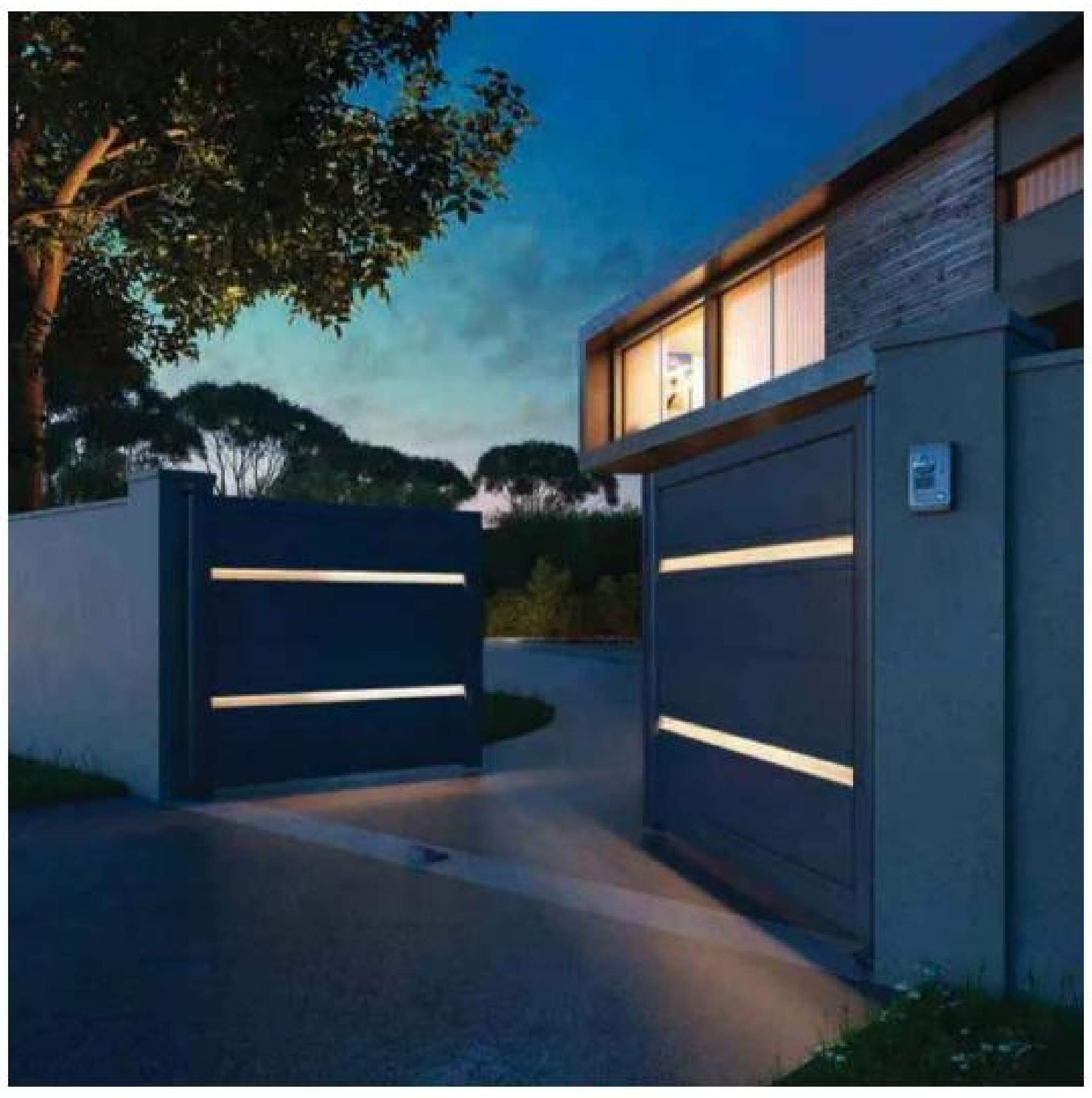

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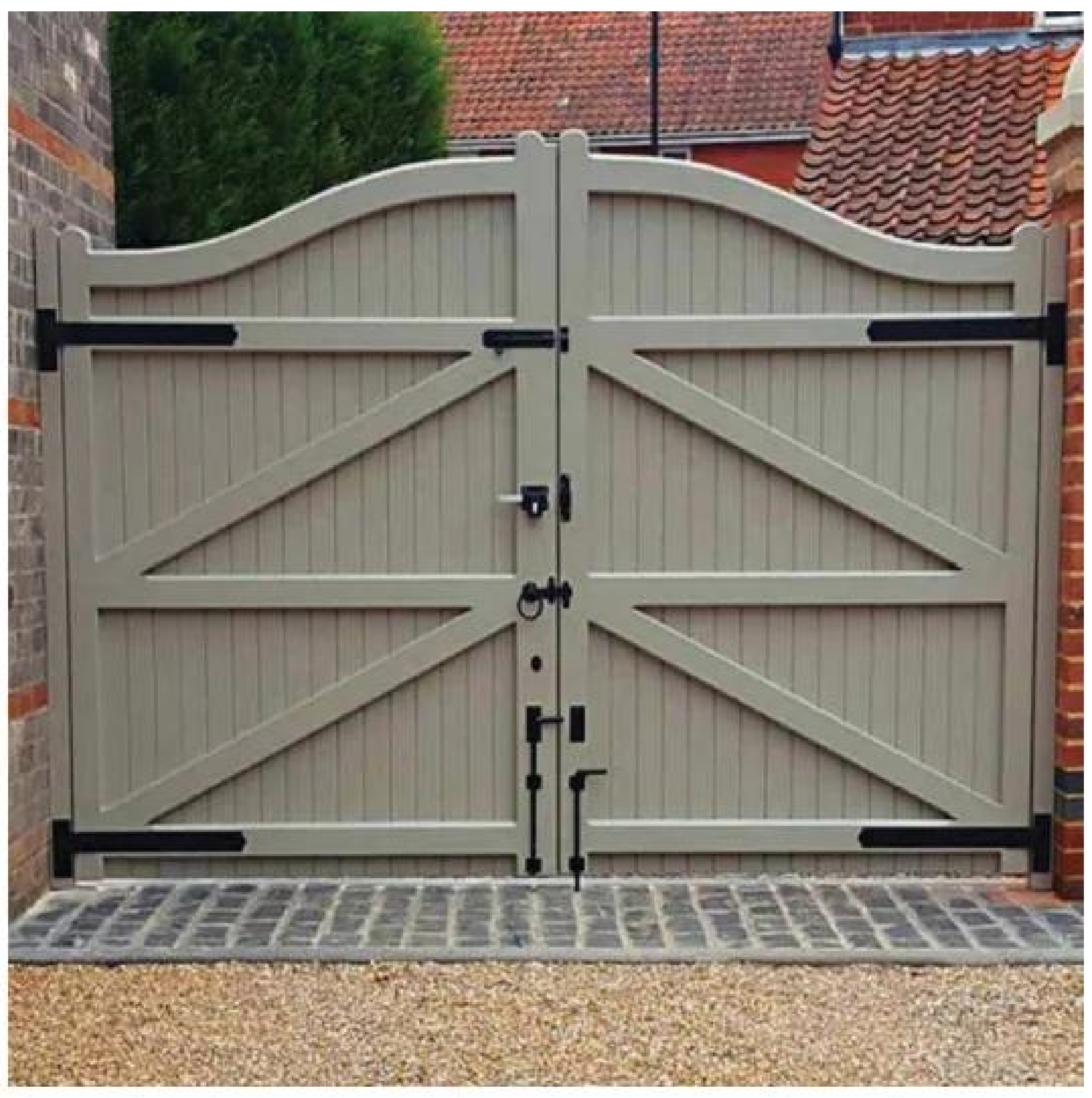

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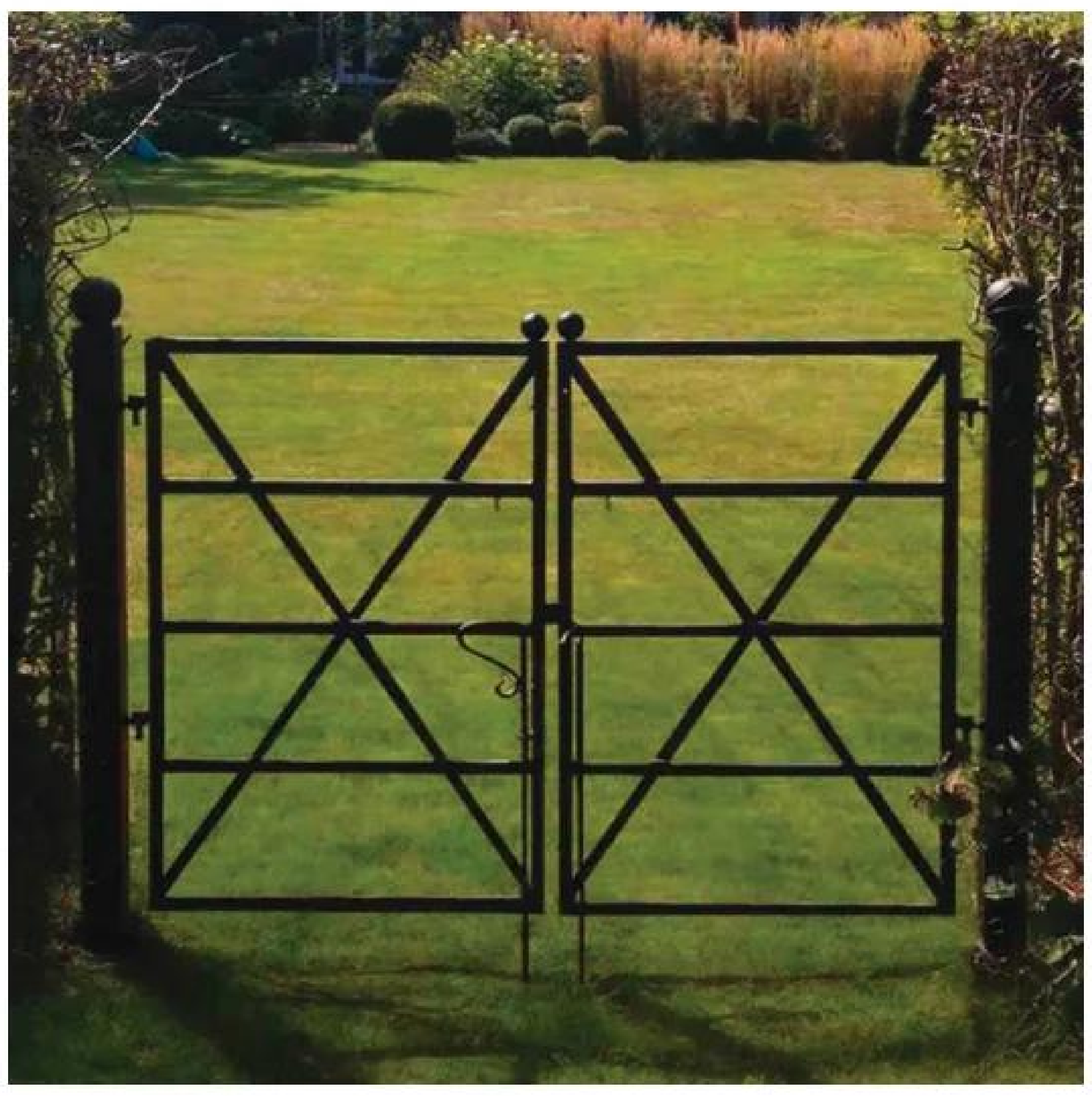

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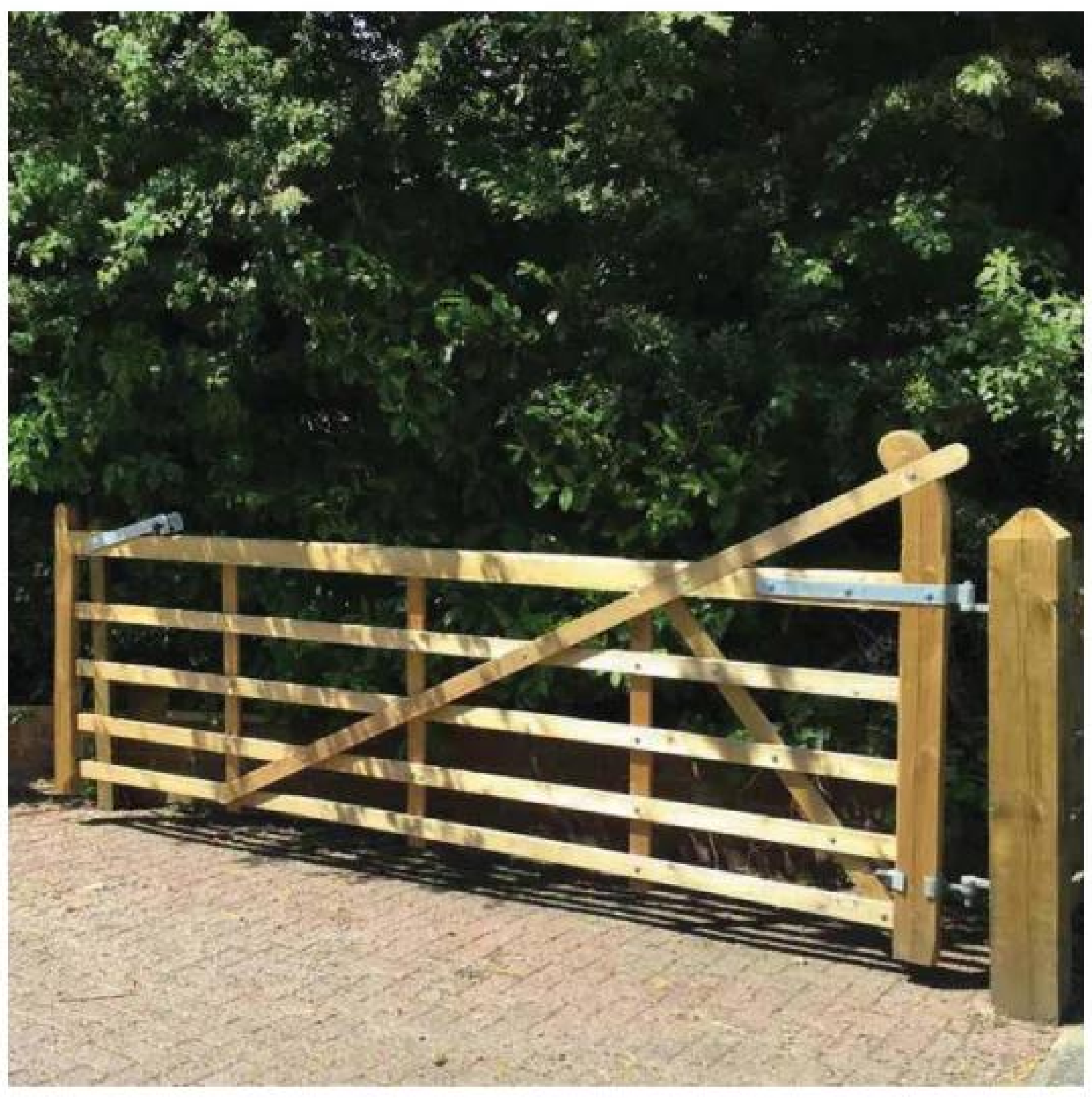

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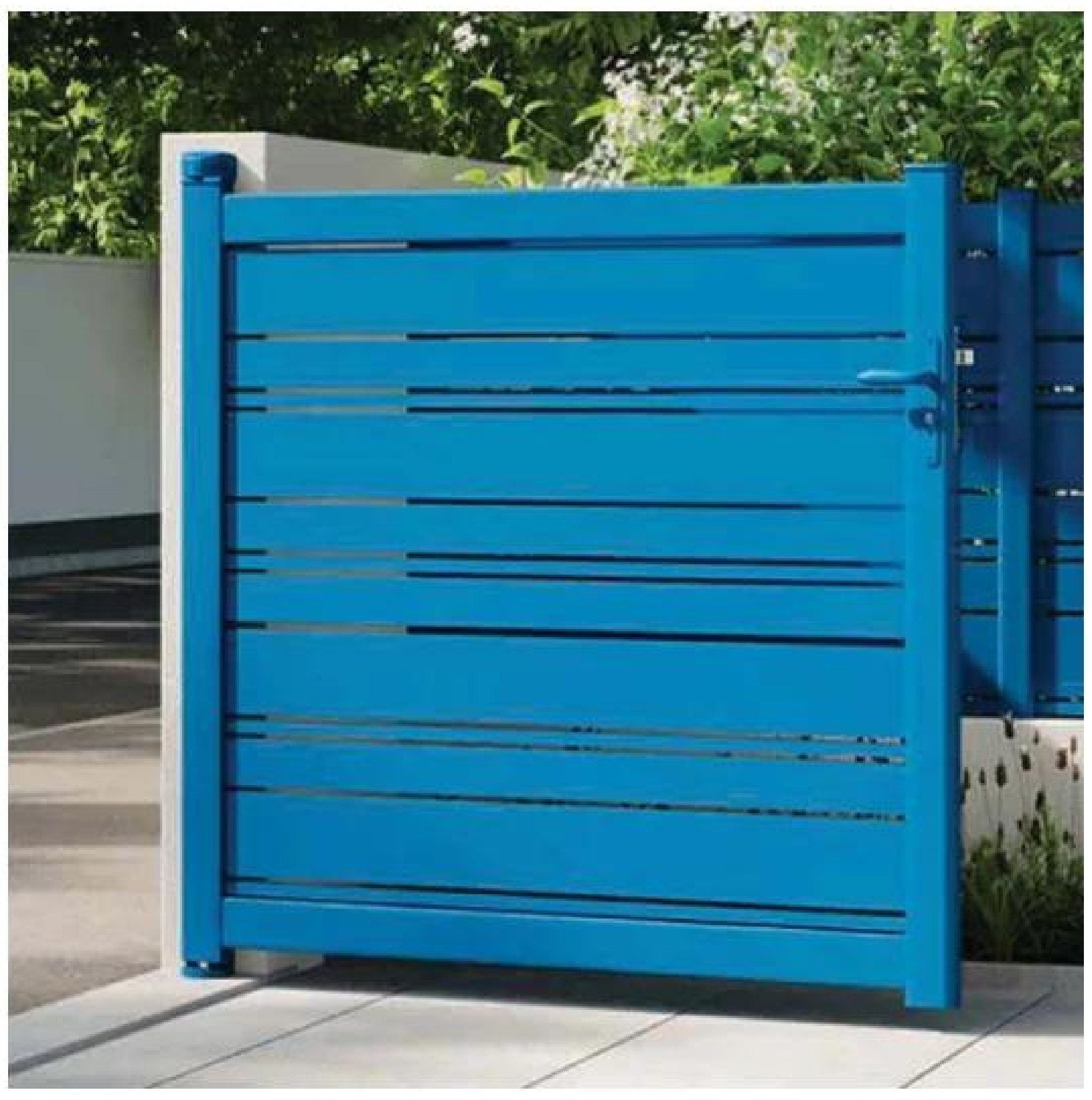

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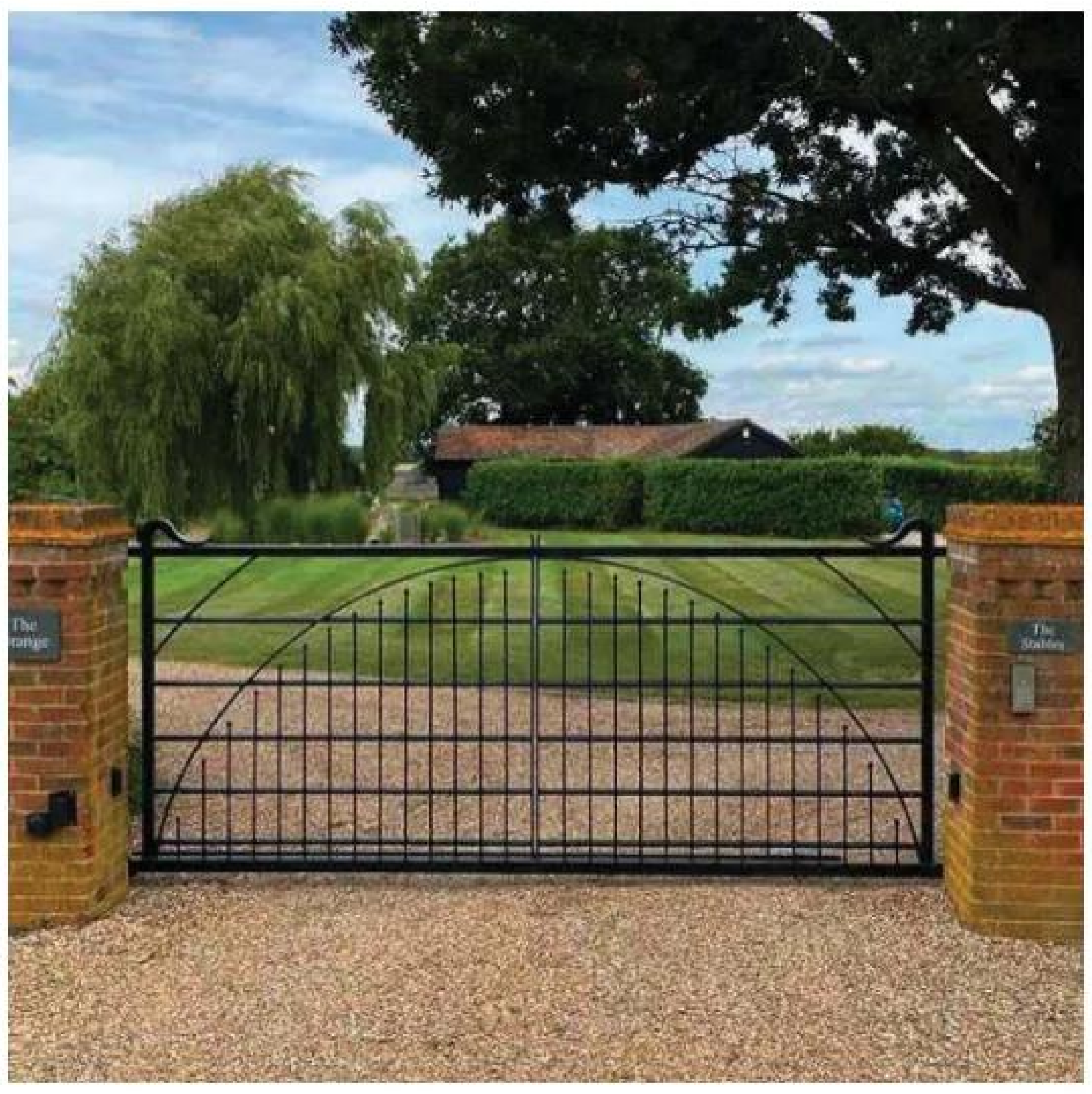

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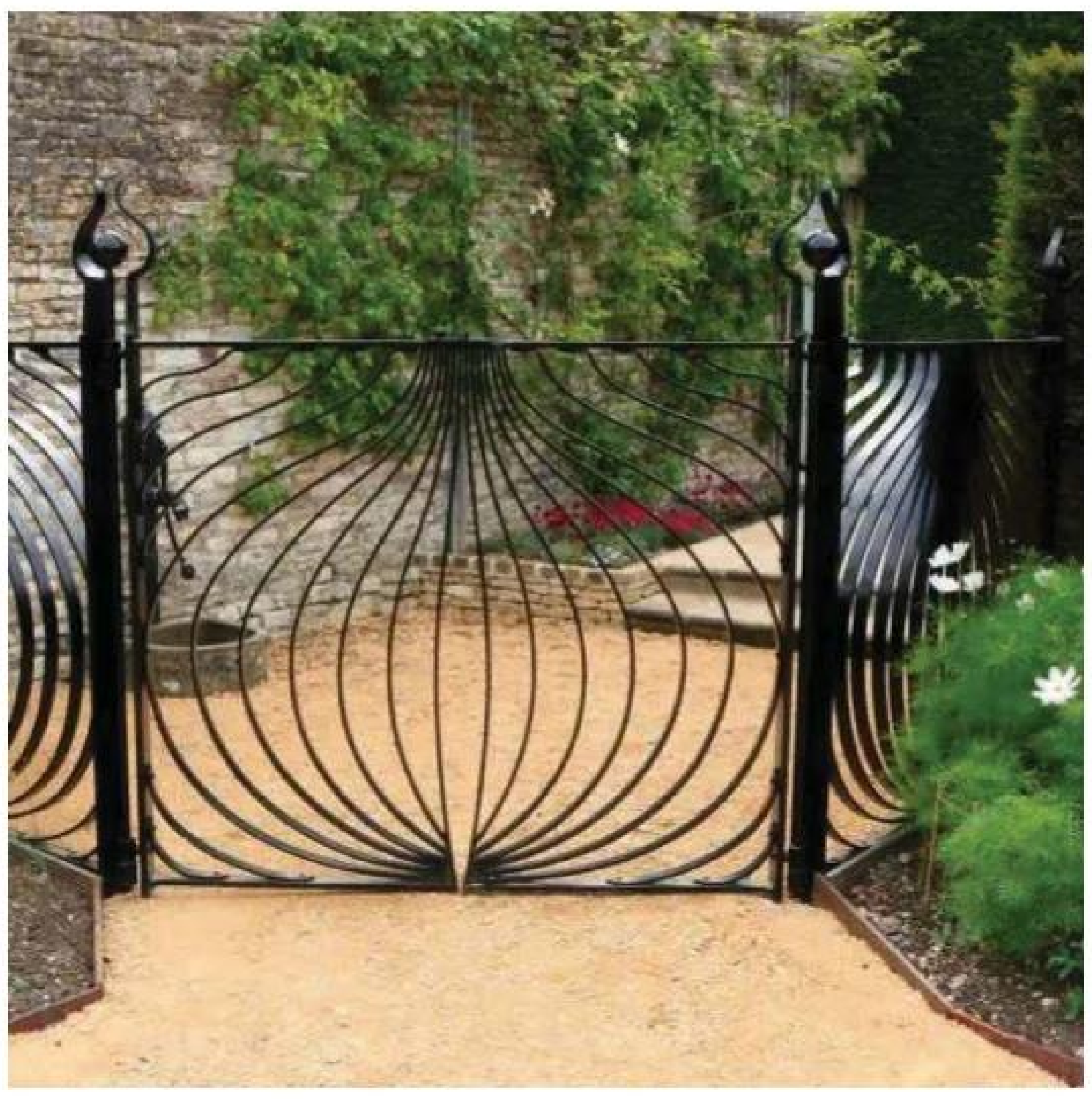

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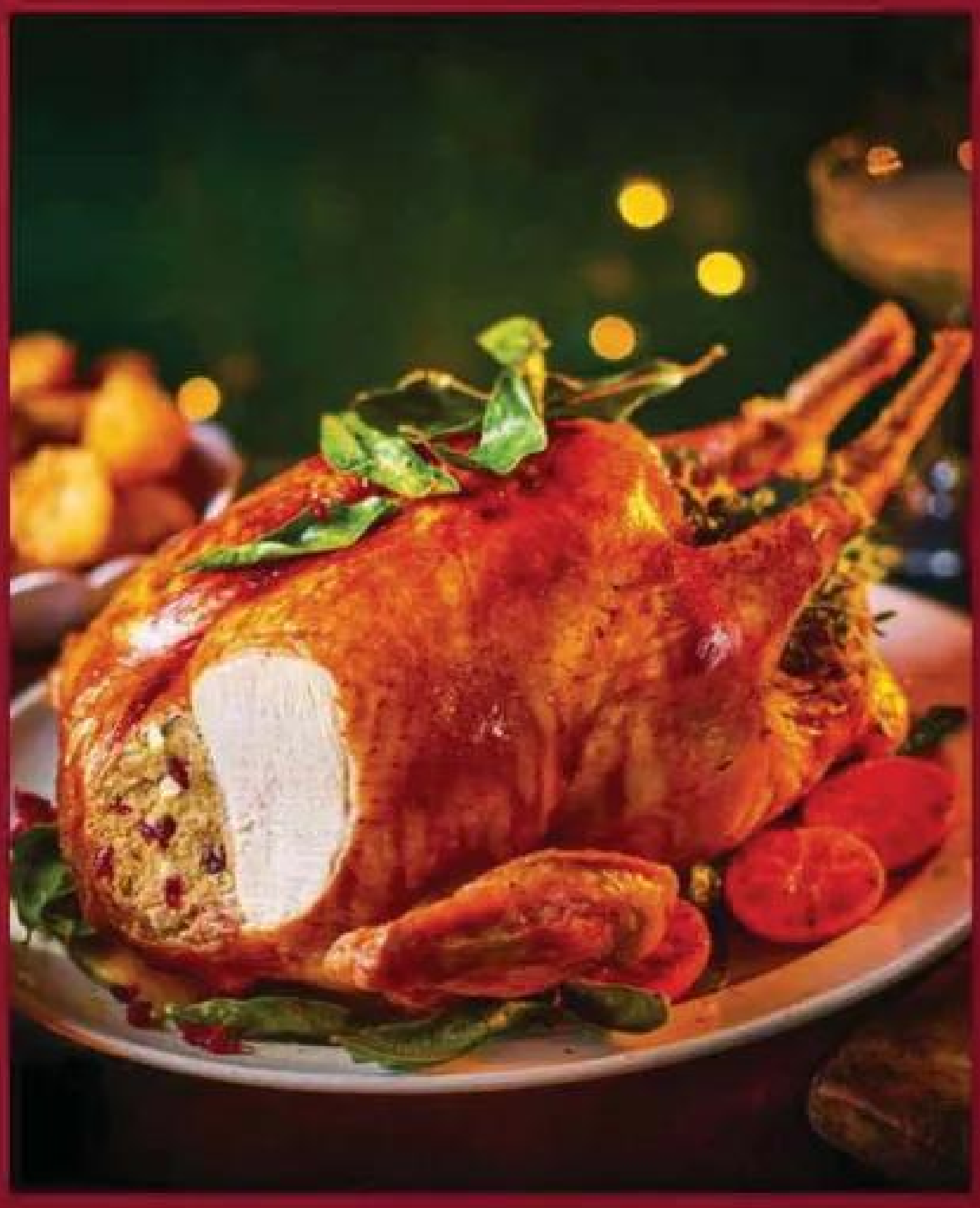

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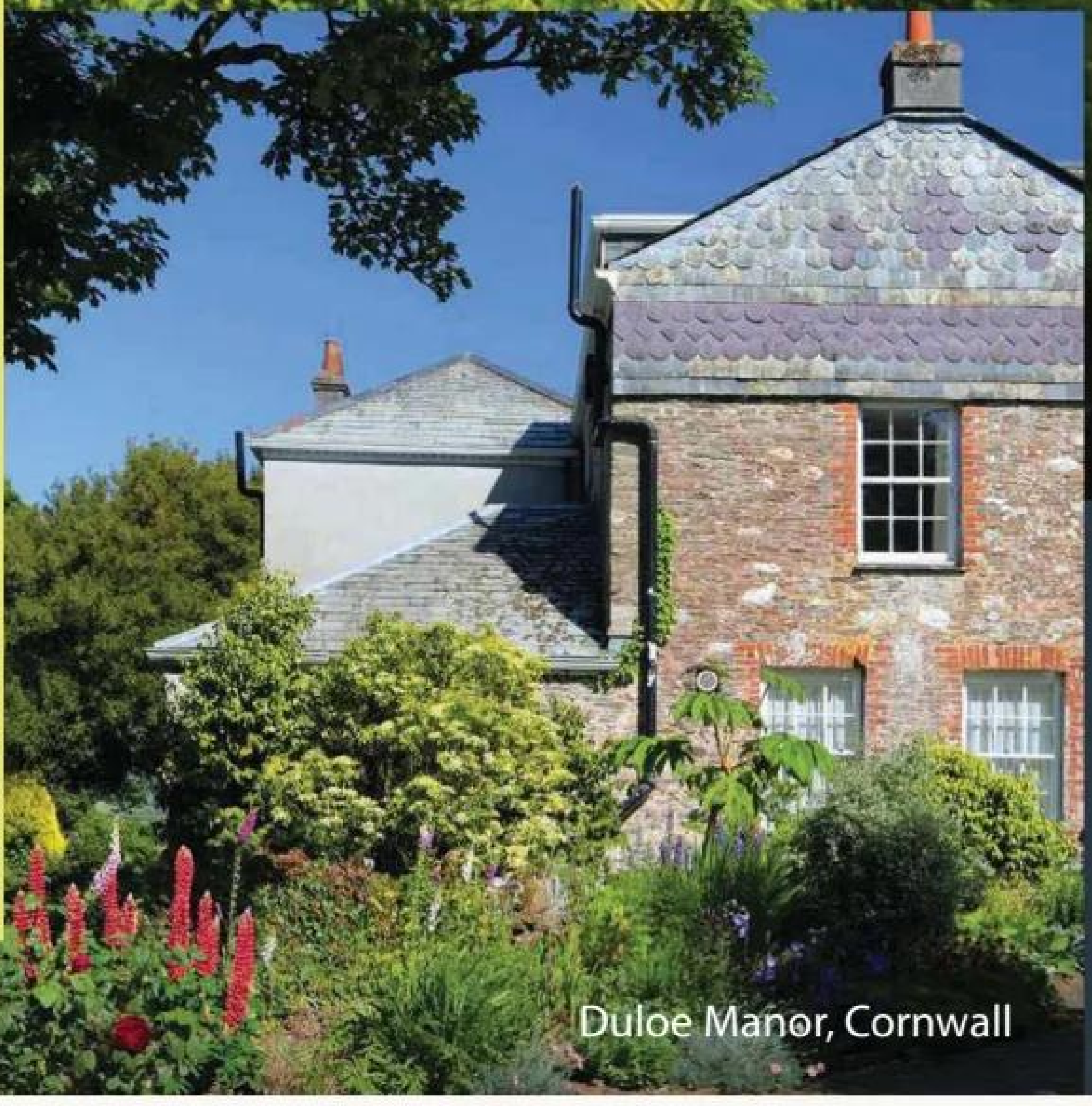

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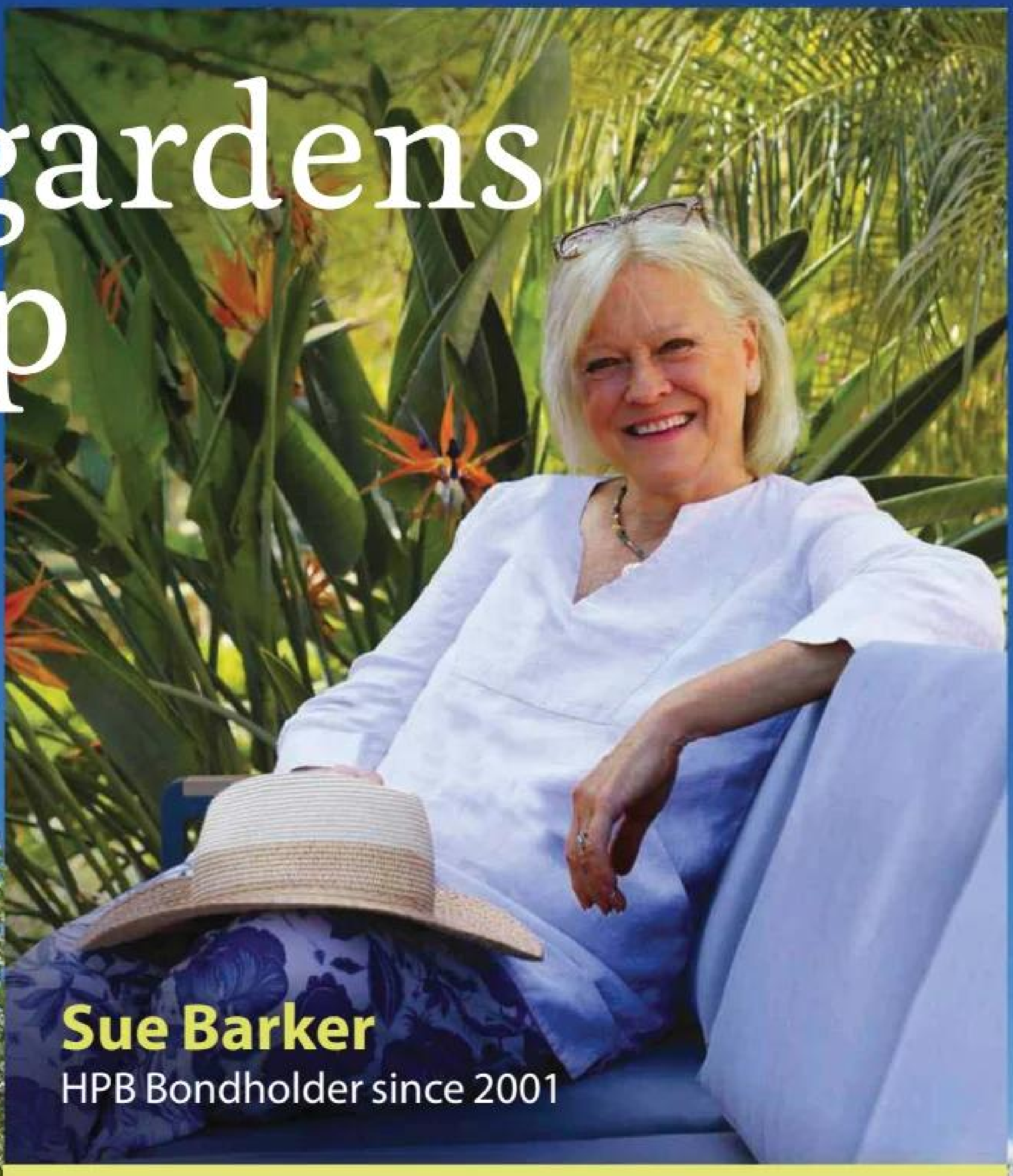

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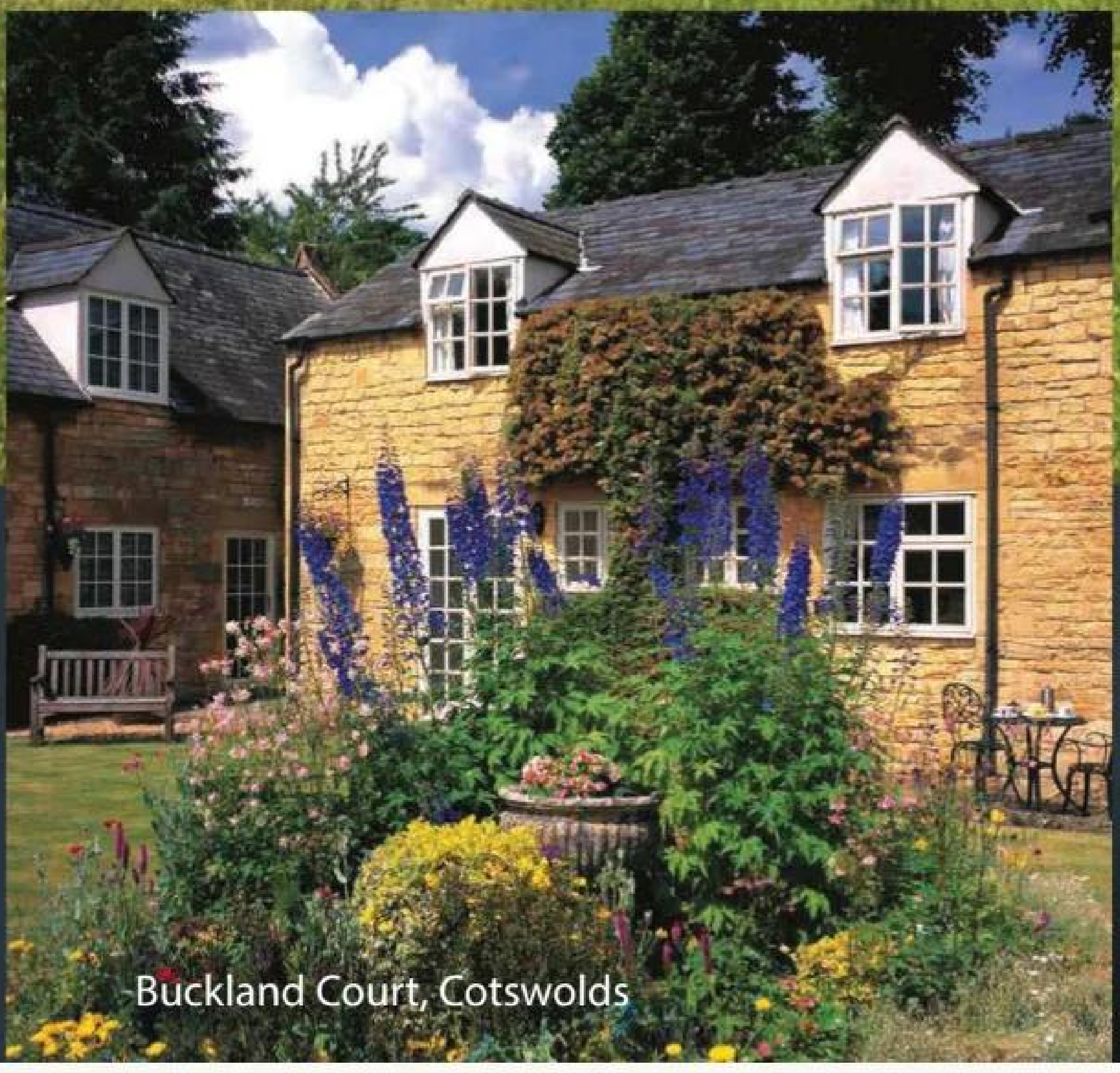

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Pauline sets sail again with TURMERIC+

Semi-retired photographer Pauline Rook, 73, living in Somerset, tells how Turmeric+ changed her life.

'It was very good, and worked wonders'

'Both my mother and my grandmother had experienced discomfort in their joints during their lives and my knees were beginning to wake me up in the night and I wanted to do something proactively to try and help myself.

'Turmeric was recommended and a nutritionist suggested I make a not very tasty drink, which I didn't fancy at all. So when I saw an advertisement for Turmeric+ from FutureYou Cambridge I thought I'd try that instead.

'It was very good, and worked wonders, but I thought it was a little expensive, so I stopped and tried a cheaper one. My knee started playing up again. so I went back to it. That was about 10 years ago and I've not had a problem since.'

Turmeric contains compounds called curcuminoids, the most notable of which is curcumin. Not only is curcumin responsible for turmeric's distinctive yellow colour but it's also what makes it such a powerful spice.

However curcumin is difficult for the body to absorb so the scientists at FutureYou Cambridge used a patented Curcuma Phospholipid Complex formulation to make Turmeric+, 30 times more absorbable than standard turmeric.

They also added vitamin C, which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage and vitamin D, which contributes to the maintenance of normal bones and maintenance of normal muscle function.

'Our advanced formulation works by using plant-based lecithin to mimic the way the body naturally absorbs curcuminoids after eating turmeric cooked with fat,'explains Dr Miriam Ferrer, PhD, Head of Product Development.

Pauline continues: 'Recently I was dinghy racing, I'm by far the oldest active dinghy woman sailor in the club, but even after hanging over the toe straps in rough seas, my knees were fine. Turmeric+ has helped me live the life I want, fully mobile and no discomfort at night.'

FREE Turmeric+

Just pay £1.50 postage

FutureYou Cambridge is offering you the opportunity to try its bestselling joint supplement, Turmeric+, for free, for 28 days.*

The Cambridge-based company is renowned for developing the highest quality health supplements backed by leading scientific research and actively work with highly-regarded scientific and nutritional experts.

Turmeric+ contains the most scientifically documented bioavailable curcumin formulation in existence, having been the focus of 45 human studies involving over 2,000 subjects.

Studies show the unique phytosome delivery system significantly increases curcumin absorption by 30 times; offering an advanced natural alternative to black pepper.

The vegan-friendly formula contains the full bouquet of curcuminoids including high levels of demethoxycurcumin (DMC), the most powerful curcuminoid.

FutureYou CAMBRIDGE
Turmeric+
28

'We want to support more people to become or stay active. We think Turmeric+ can play an important role in that journey.' says Adam Cleevely, FutureYou Cambridge's Chair.

'We offer people their first pack of Turmeric+ for free so they can experience Turmeric+ for themselves. Most will know if it's working for them within four to eight weeks – and if they like it, they will stick with it.'

'I've been genuinely amazed by the effect of Turmeric+. It's transformative.'

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***Turmeric+ contains vitamin C which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage and bones. Vitamin D contributes to the maintenance of normal muscle function.** Introductory offer valid for new UK customers only. Offer expires 30th November 2024 and cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotions. Cancel any time, without obligation. See FutureYouHealth.com/TUF384 for full terms and conditions.

DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, the crossword and the big idea

Low-maintenance plantings, designed to work together ecologically are a key aspect of trial garden Sichtungsgarten Weihenstephan in Freising, Germany, which is one of 27 gardens featured in *The Botanic Garden* by Ambra Edwards, reviewed on page 106.

CHRISTA BRAND / WEIHENSTEPHAN TRIAL GARDEN / GAP PHOTOS

Table Mountain provides a dramatic backdrop to the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden in Cape Town, South Africa.

Enclosing more than 2,000 square metres of tropical planting, the Climatron at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St Louis, USA, was the first geodesic dome to be used as a conservatory.

A miniature version of Stonehenge is one of the more eclectic visitor attractions at the Nong Nooch Tropical Garden in Chonburi Province, Thailand.

WORLD OF POSSIBILITY

This superb tour of the world's botanical gardens highlights their vital role in saving the planet's flora, says **Claire Masset**

The Botanic Garden is the latest offering from award-winning writer and garden historian Ambra Edwards and – like all her books – it does not disappoint. Blending history, science, plants and people, it is both absorbing and instructive. Despite its large format and lavish production, this engrossing book is more than a beautiful, coffee-table tour of the world's most amazing botanical gardens. Edwards delves into their diverse histories and various uses – as medicinal hotbeds, botanical training grounds, living cabinets of curiosities and agents of Empire.

If you were expecting a purely historical account, you may be surprised to learn about the vital role botanical gardens play today, not just individually but together as a global network of shared materials, knowledge and research. Forty per cent of the world's plant species are threatened with extinction and the combined work of our botanic gardens is crucial to their survival. As Edwards explains, these gardens were never simply places of horticultural escape and plant theatre; they have always served a higher purpose and their role today is critical.

The Botanic Garden reveals just how vital these gardens' work is – from running conservation projects in some of the world's most fragile biodiversity hotspots to looking after bomb-proof seed banks, helping preserve local flora and testing plants' climatic tolerances in light of the changing climate. Learn how botanic gardens are embracing new research and technologies and even making an impact beyond their perceived remit. They are, for instance, playing a role in the field of biomimetics, helping mathematicians and physicists solve engineering problems.

All these areas, and many more, are illustrated with detailed examples of positive impact, both on a local and global level. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has brought alpine sow thistles (*Cicerbita alpina*) back from the verge of extinction in the Cairngorms National Park. Kew's Millennium Seed Bank has helped restock Australia's forests after the catastrophic fires of 2019-20. Nong Nooch Tropical Garden in Thailand propagates some of the world's rarest and most difficult plants, sharing them with other gardens and specialists throughout the world. This spirit of reciprocity and collaboration is truly heartening, especially for anyone suffering from eco-anxiety.

After a fascinating introduction on the evolution of botanic gardens, Edwards offers us enlightening features on 27 individual gardens. These are as diverse as they are fascinating – from some of the oldest at Padua, Leiden and Oxford, to some of the largest, including Kew, and newest, such as Australia's Royal Botanic

J PARSONS / GETTYIMAGES, MICHAEL SNELL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, PIERRICK LEMARET / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

This book will educate and delight and may even inspire you to join in the work of these organisations

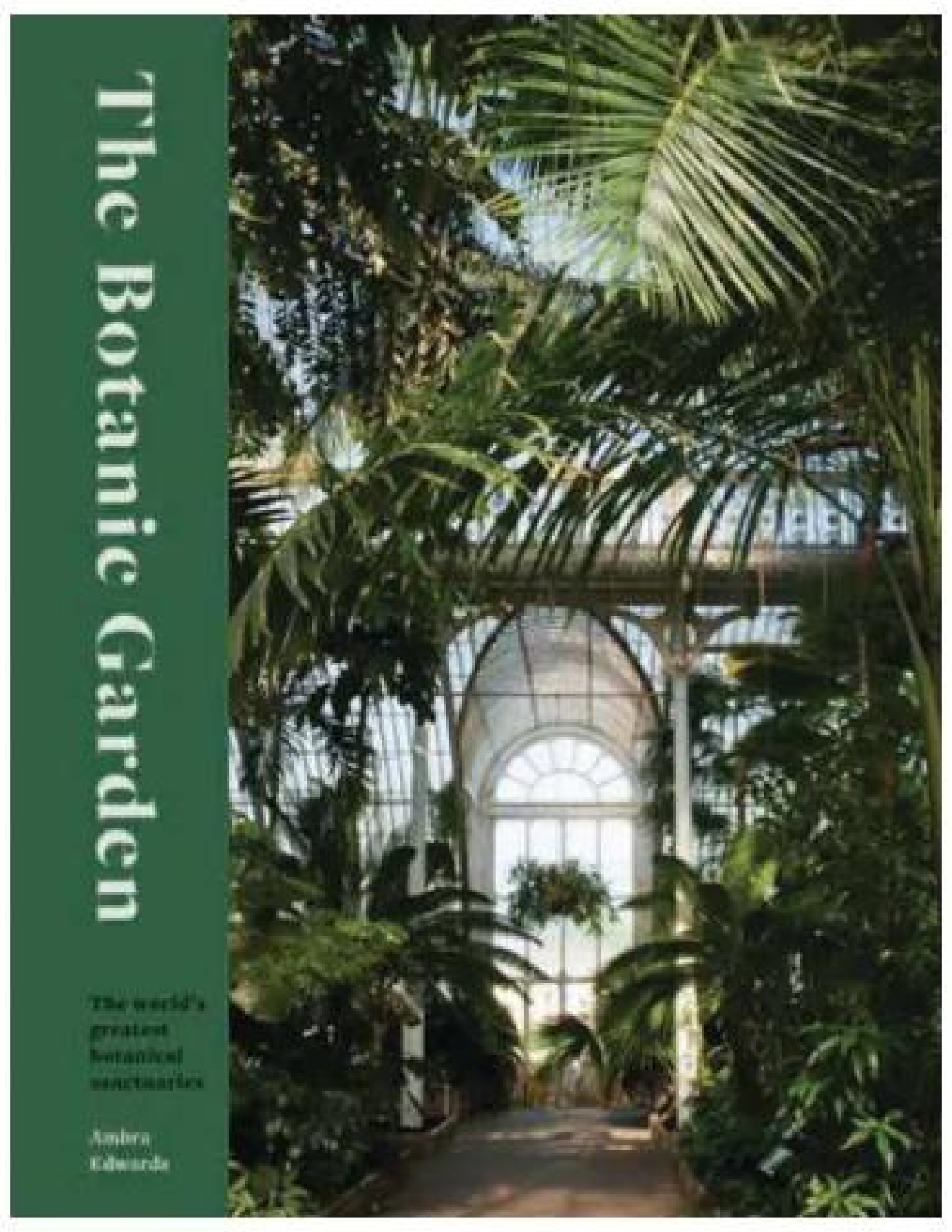
Gardens Cranbourne. All are generously illustrated with vibrant photography, mixing wanderlust-inducing vistas and astonishing plant close-ups. Captions are clear and knowledgeable; the page design is clean and elegant.

As you read, a picture comes through of incredible variety. We travel to Tromsø Arctic-Alpine Botanical Garden, which harbours plants from some of the world's harshest environments; Sichtungsgarten Weihenstephan in Germany, whose research into plant communities is inspiring contemporary garden design; the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawaii that is leading the way in ethnobotany; and China's Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, which holds the world's largest collection of wild edible plants and undertakes vital experiments in agroforestry.

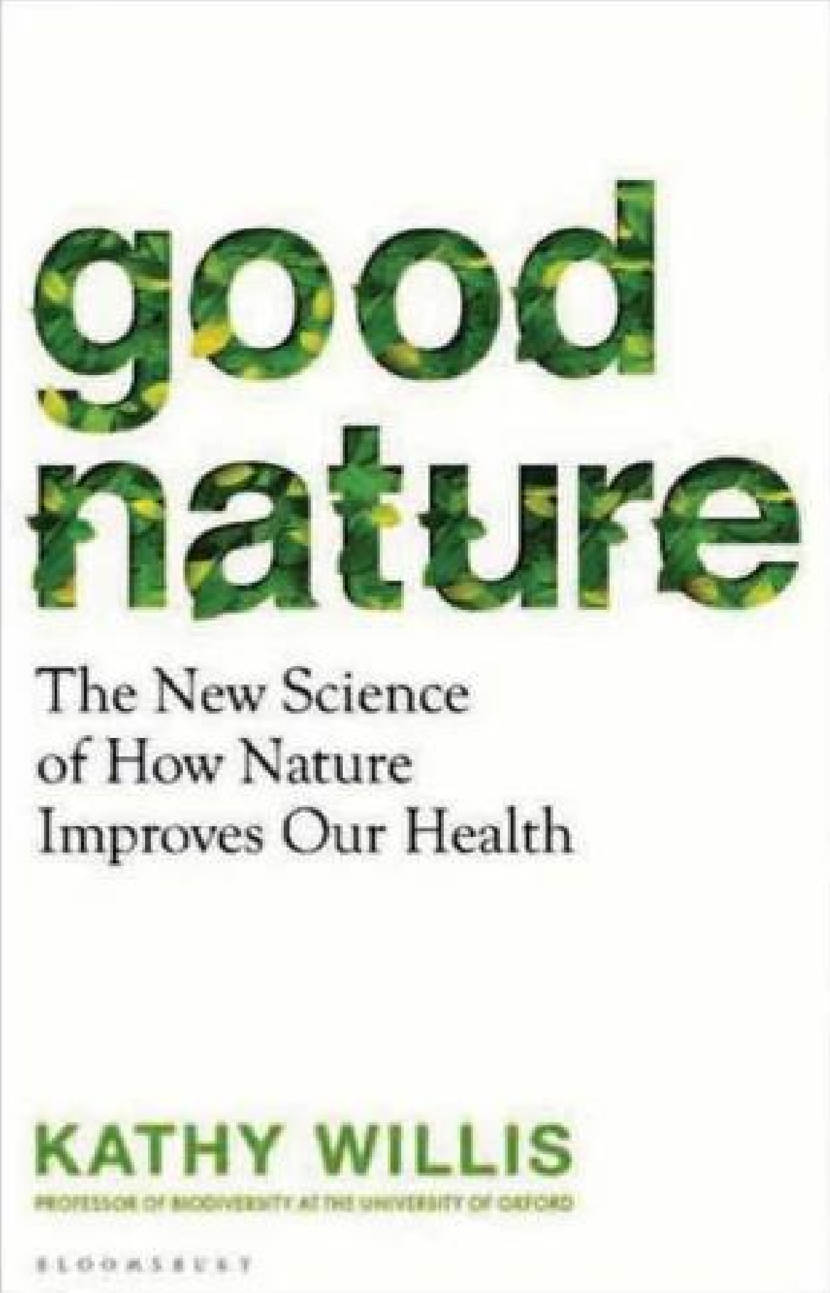
Edwards does not shy away from illustrating the questionable histories of some of these institutions. She shows how they are addressing their pasts and acknowledging neglected collaborators while also using their spaces, collections, staff and collective power to engage people as far and wide as possible and help shape global nature strategies. This timely book will educate and delight and may even inspire you to join in the work of these all-important organisations. □

Reviewer **Claire Masset** is a garden writer and publisher.

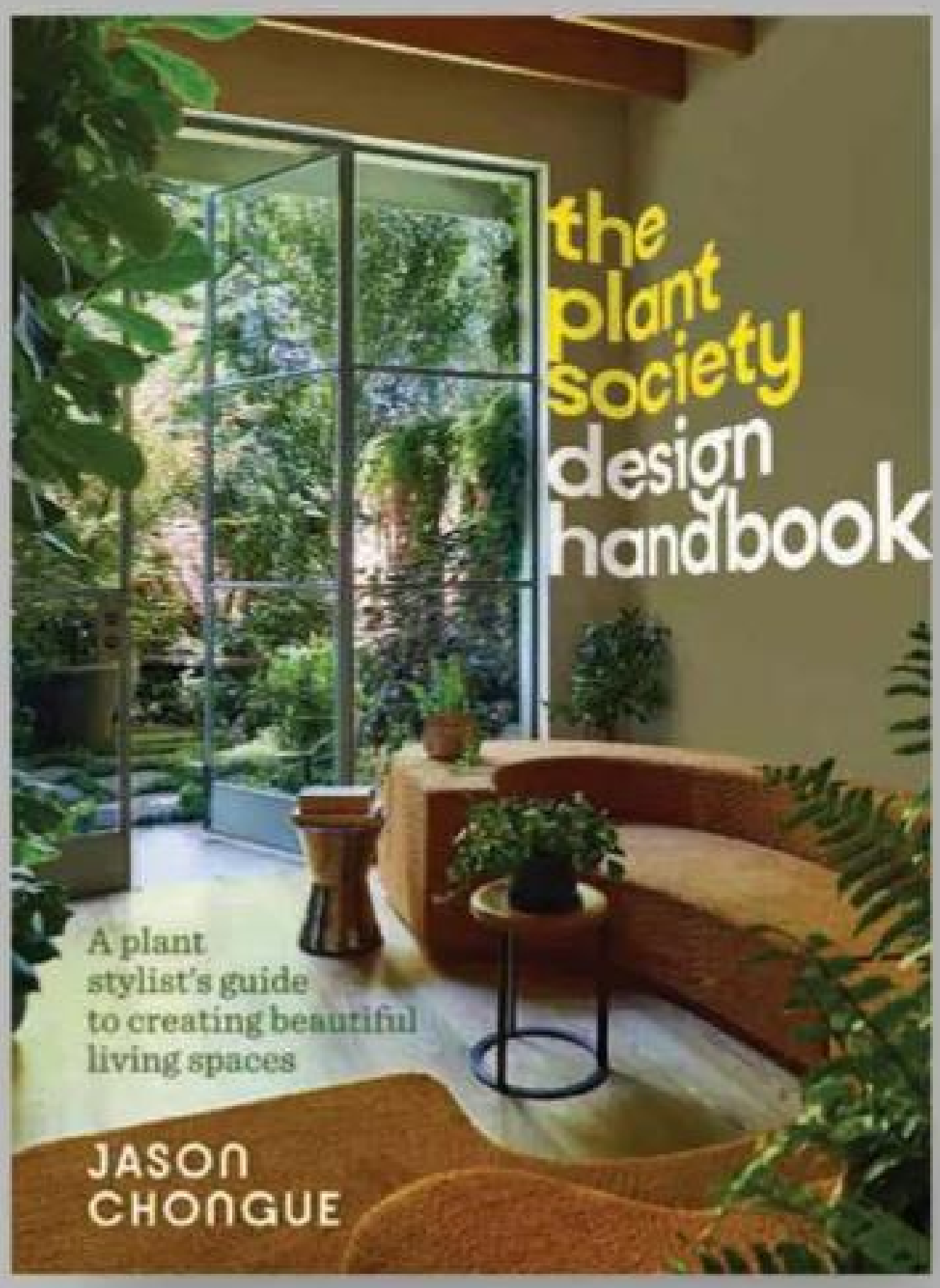
THE BOTANIC GARDEN: THE WORLD'S GREATEST BOTANICAL SANCTUARIES
by Ambra Edwards
Frances Lincoln, £30,
ISBN 978-0711282261


The Botanic Garden
The world's greatest botanical sanctuaries
Ambra Edwards

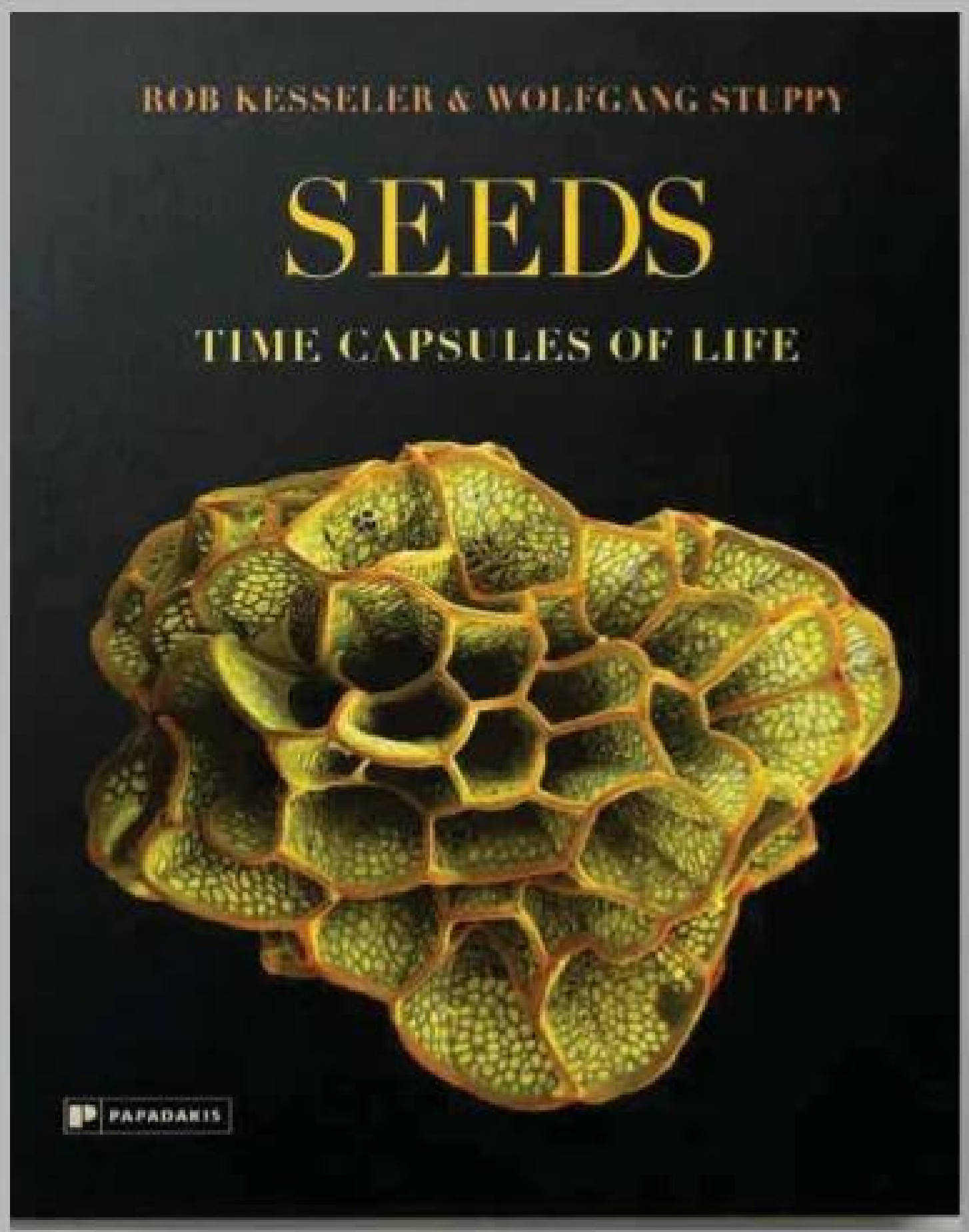
Recommended reads this month


good nature
The New Science of How Nature Improves Our Health
KATHY WILLIS

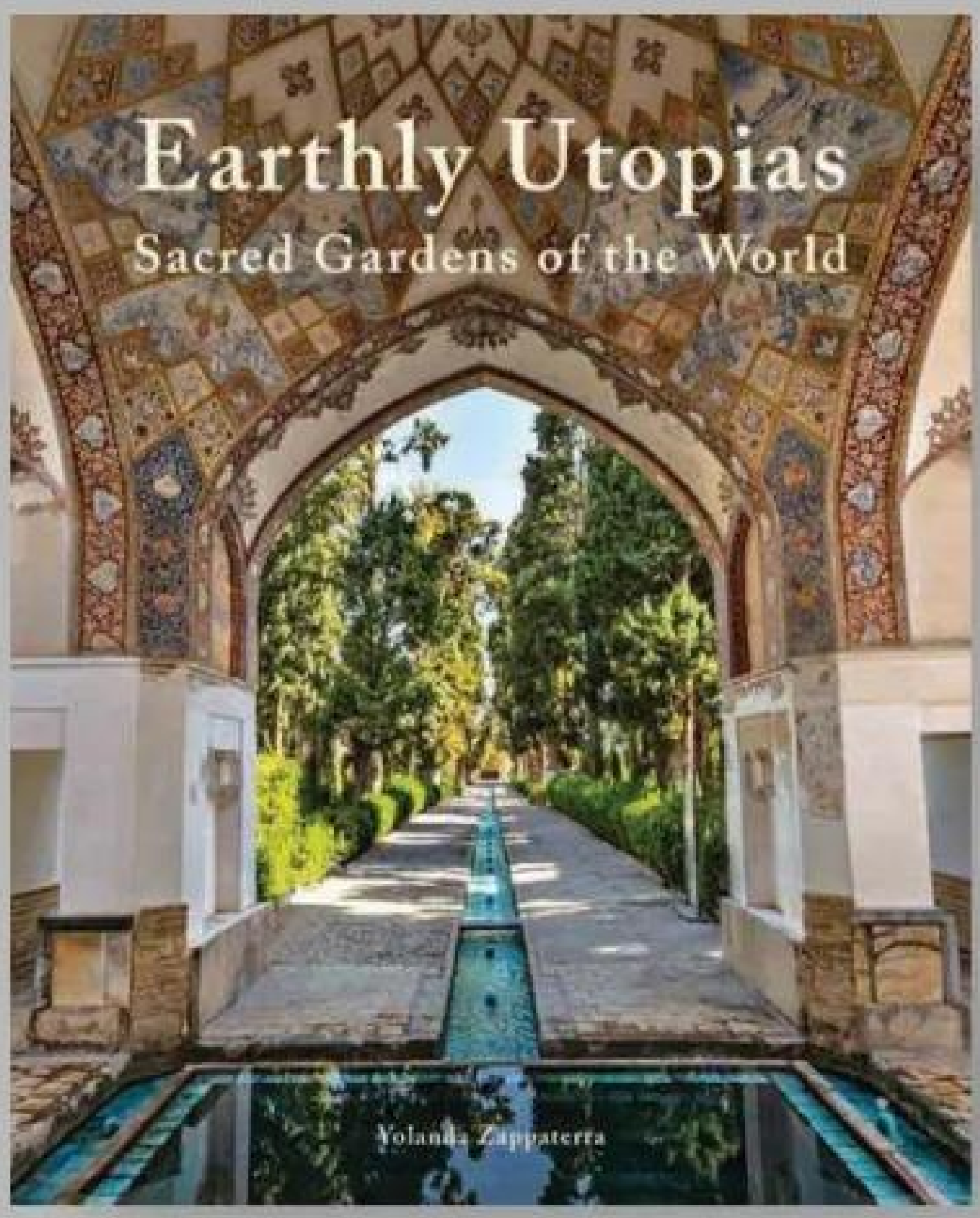
GOOD NATURE: THE NEW SCIENCE OF HOW NATURE IMPROVES OUR HEALTH
by Kathy Willis
Bloomsbury Publishing, £20
ISBN 978-1526664891
The Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Oxford looks at the scientifically proven findings that show that seeing, smelling and touching nature can directly improve our health, mood and longevity – not only in the wider world but in the home, workplace and garden, too.


the plant society design handbook
A plant stylist's guide to creating beautiful living spaces
JASON CHONGUE

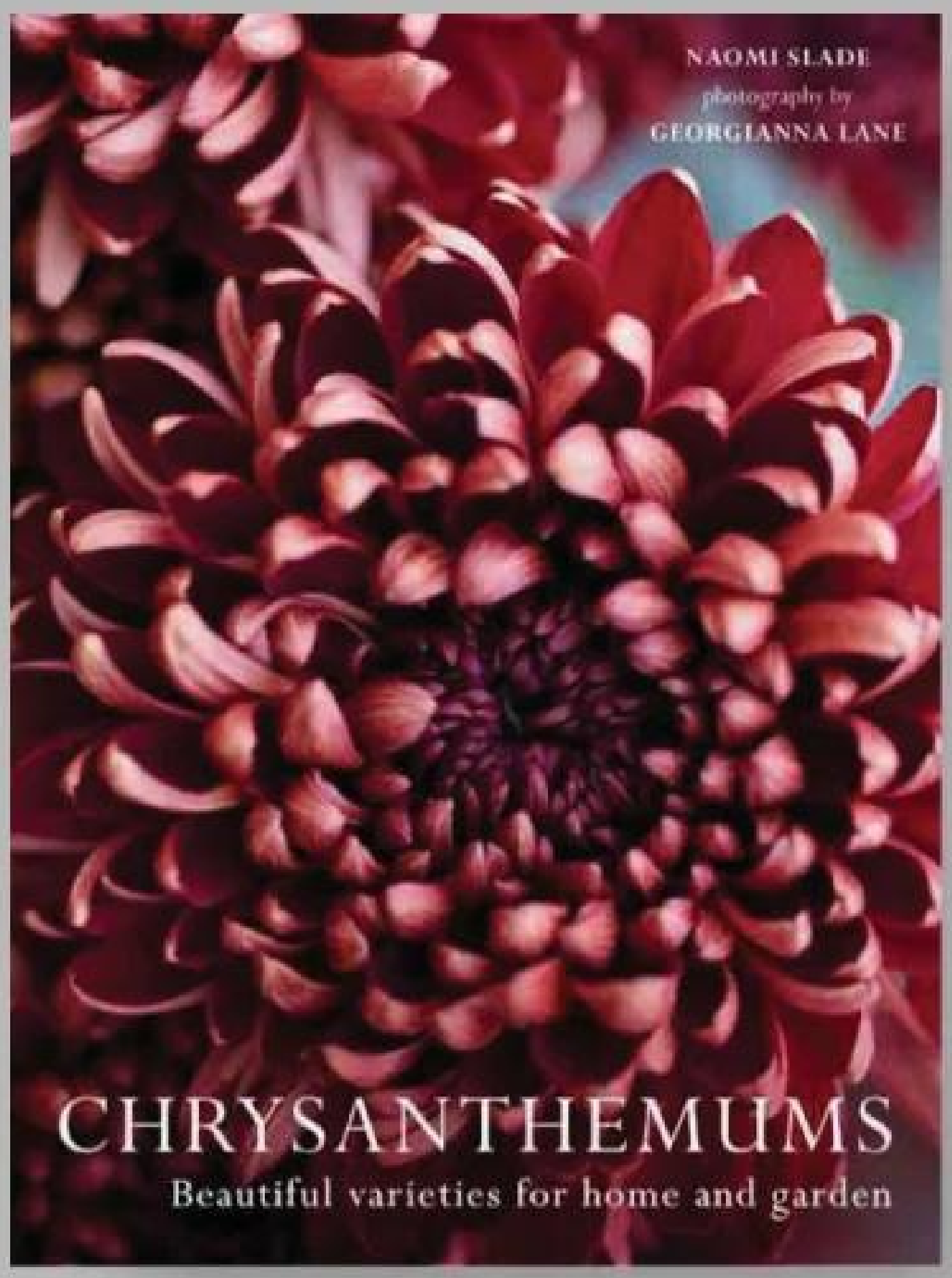
THE PLANT SOCIETY DESIGN HANDBOOK
by Jason Chongue
Murdoch Books, £25
ISBN 978-1922616791
The designer and plant curator shows how to combine a love of plants with an interest in interior design. The advice on analysing your space, suggested room layouts, plant placement and grouping is complemented by plant care advice and inspiring photography.


ROB KESSELER & WOLFGANG STUPPY
SEEDS
TIME CAPSULES OF LIFE
PAPADAKIS

SEEDS: TIME CAPSULES OF LIFE
by Rob Kesseler and Wolfgang Stuppy
Papadakis Books, £40
ISBN 978-1906506759
Artist Rob Kesseler and seed morphologist Wolfgang Stuppy (previously of Kew's Millennium Seed Bank) join forces to reveal the wonderful diversity and complexity of seeds. The stunning close-up photographs and electron micrographs reveal the amazing complexity of even the tiniest of seeds.


Earthly Utopias
Sacred Gardens of the World
Yolanda Zappaterra

EARTHLY UTOPIAS: SACRED GARDENS OF THE WORLD
by Yolanda Zappaterra
Frances Lincoln, £30
ISBN 978-0711285897
A tour of the most magnificent sacred gardens in the world, via cathedrals, monasteries, abbeys, temples, mausoleums and shrines. Whether an ancient myth-filled site, a careful restoration or a brand new garden, each one shows how religion, philosophy and spirituality can inspire beautiful garden design.


NAOMI SLADE
photography by GEORGIANNA LANE
CHRYSANTHEMUMS
Beautiful varieties for home and garden

CHRYSANTHEMUMS: BEAUTIFUL VARIETIES FOR HOME AND GARDEN
By Naomi Slade and Georgianna Lane
Pavilion Books, £25
ISBN 978-0008662738
The latest title in Pavilion's best-selling series of stylish floral guides (previous subjects include Peonies, Dahlias and Lilies), looks at this oft-overlooked garden stalwart and reliable late-season cut flower that is now enjoying a resurgence in popularity. An excellent read for anyone wanting to propagate, grow or cut the perfect chrysanthemum.

NEIL KLEIN

‘If you emulate nature, you’re on to a winner’

Gardener, television presenter and author **Carol Klein** talks about her new book, the books she loves, her current challenges and what she’s up to next

What’s your new book about? It’s a memoir about my life from the word go, up to the present day and a bit into the future. I started writing it a few years ago and things have happened since then, especially this year [Carol was diagnosed with breast cancer, then had a double mastectomy in April; she has subsequently been given the all clear]. I’ve written about that too. It’s all very positive, of course. The title of the book came from my husband, Neil.

What did you learn about yourself from writing the book? That there was far too much to fit into one book. I also found I need a sense of priority. Whether I’m writing or doing TV, there’s always too much to say. Self-editing is a difficult thing to do.

If there’s one idea or piece of advice that you’d like to share from the book, what would it be? Garden whenever you can. Encourage other people, especially children, to do the same. And grow your own plants – get to know them. And the biggest lesson of all: gardening is not nature, but if you emulate nature, you’re on to a winner.

I’ll read anything by or about… Richard Mabey. I just love his writing. I’ve never read anything of his that wasn’t completely enthralling. I also love Christopher Lloyd, Margery Fish, Beth Chatto and Graham Greene. Also, the Inspector Montalbano books by Andrea Camilleri. They’re better than going on holiday, really.

Which book is currently on your night stand? I’ve just started *England’s Gardens: A Modern History* by Stephen Parker. It’s fabulous, and has fantastic photographs too – you need good pictures if you’re talking about gardens.

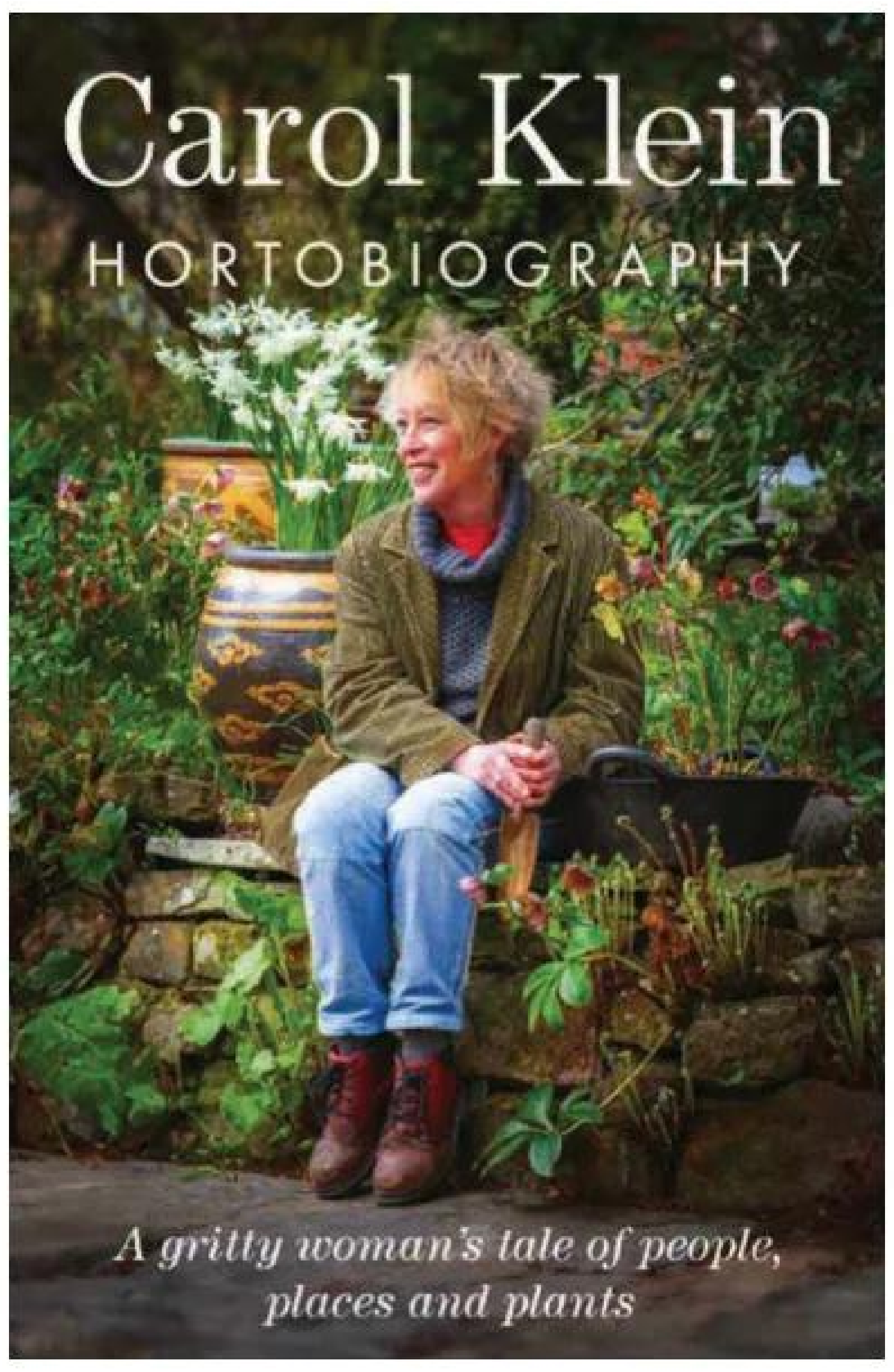
What first sparked your interest in gardening? As a child, I used to bring in soil from the garden, empty it on to the kitchen floor, then decorate it with flowers. My Mum had hardly any time for gardening, but she was mad keen on it. She started me off with big, fat nasturtium seeds and I remember pushing them into the soil, watching their progress and then actually collecting seed from those plants. I’ve been doing exactly the same thing ever since.

Have you made any changes to your own garden recently? We’ve been here for 46 years and my major thing at the moment is trying to accommodate the mature trees. My Mum gave me a *Cercis* more than 40 years ago, which she grew from (and here’s a nice bit of alliteration for you) a pod that she picked up from the pavement in Portugal. And, of course, it’s grown bigger and bigger. While it’s still flowering well, it looks a little drawn. My biggest failure is not keeping up with the trees.

Do you have a guilty gardening secret? Not pricking out seedlings promptly. This year I was out of action for a few weeks, but it’s something I always struggle with. The answer is to limit the number of things you grow from seed and then limit the number of seeds that you sow. Sow more sparsely!

Do you have a favourite garden or landscape to visit? The garden at Ashwood Nurseries is wonderful and John Massey is a brilliant bloke. Great Dixter, naturally, but also Marchants Hardy Plants [see page 82]. I’ve known [founder] Graham Gough ever since he was working with Elizabeth Strangman, who is one of my all-time heroines. I love the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh – I love everything about it, but particularly its overall attitude. It’s incredibly welcoming and it involves not just visitors from elsewhere but everybody in the city. It has real energy.

What are you up to at the moment? I’m going on a book tour and have recorded an audiobook too, and I’m filming for *Gardeners’ World*. We’ve got six and half acres next door and I’m going to slowly make a ‘nature reserve’. I’m going to plant a wood, make a pond, create a meadow and extend a bit of my garden to make a big bog garden… all sorts of things.



HORTOBIOGRAPHY: A GRITTY WOMAN’S TALE OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND PLANTS
by Carol Klein
Witness Books, £22
ISBN 978-1529144246

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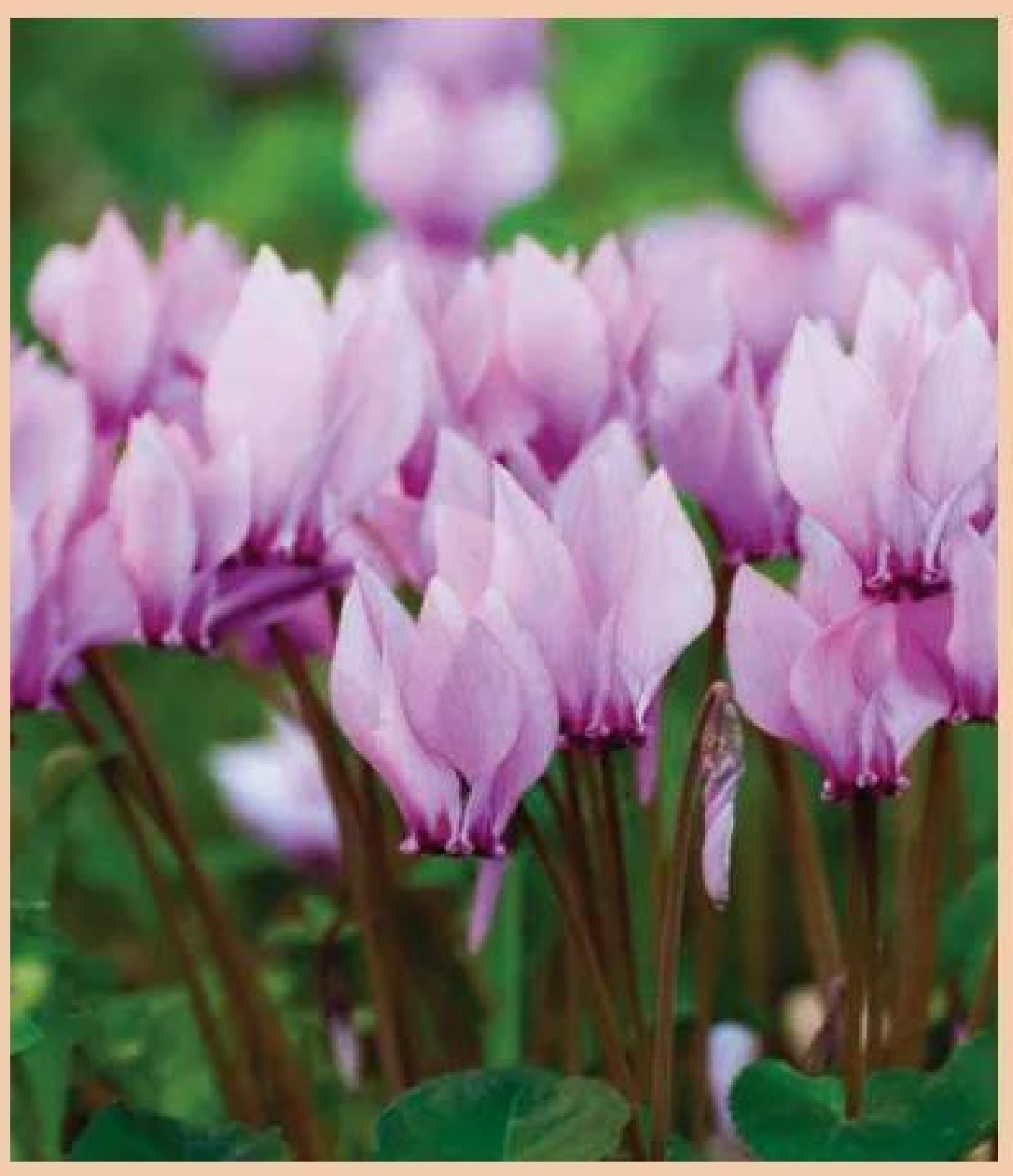

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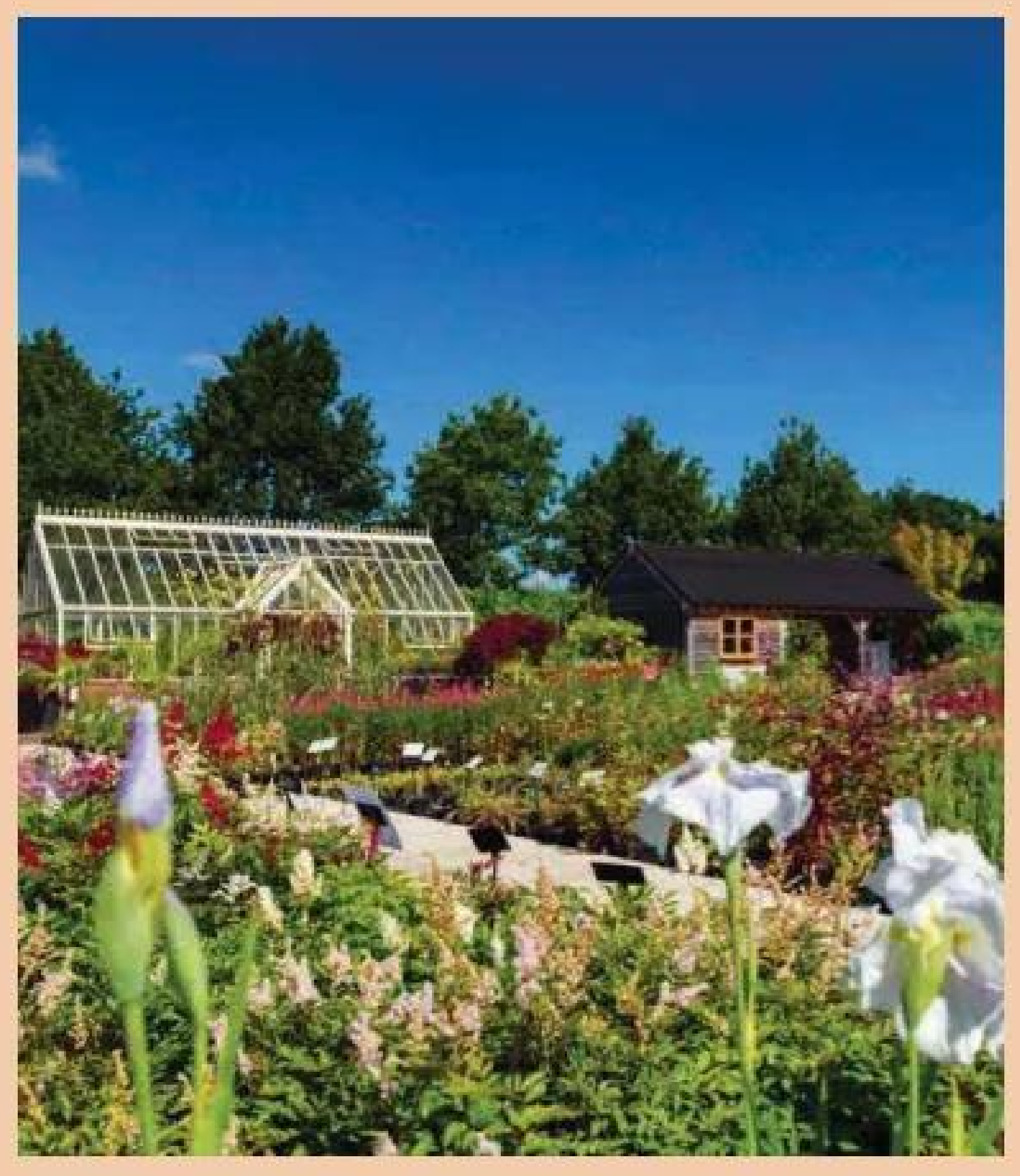

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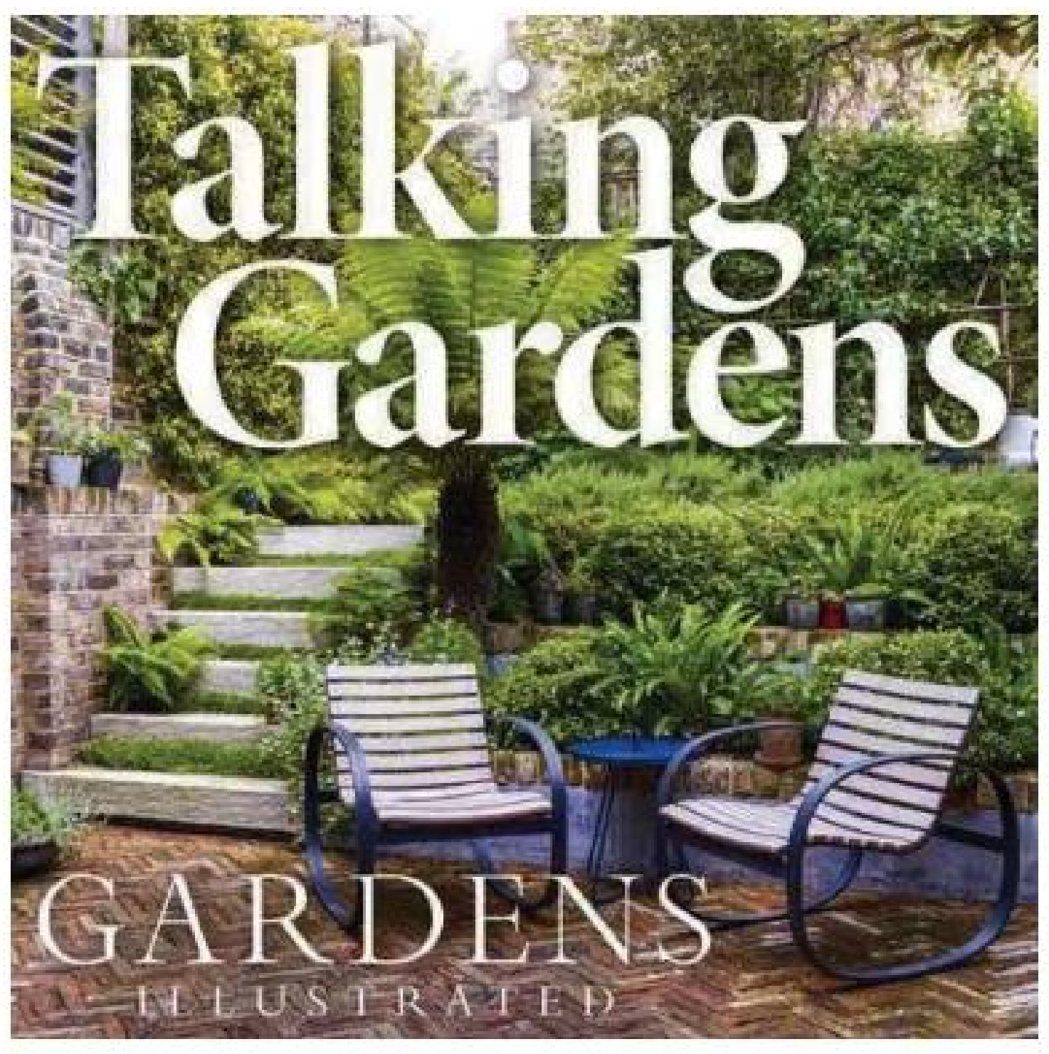

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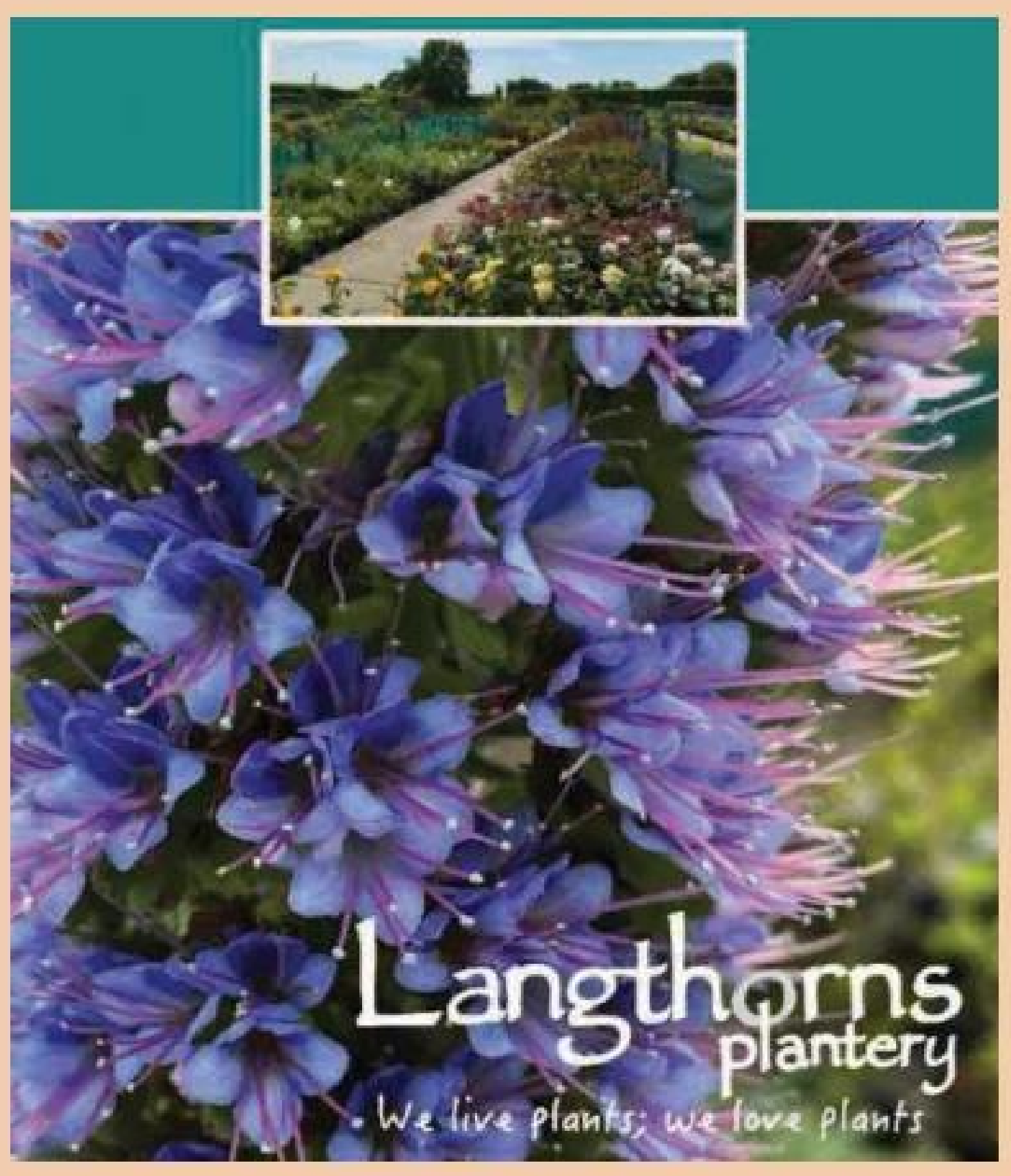

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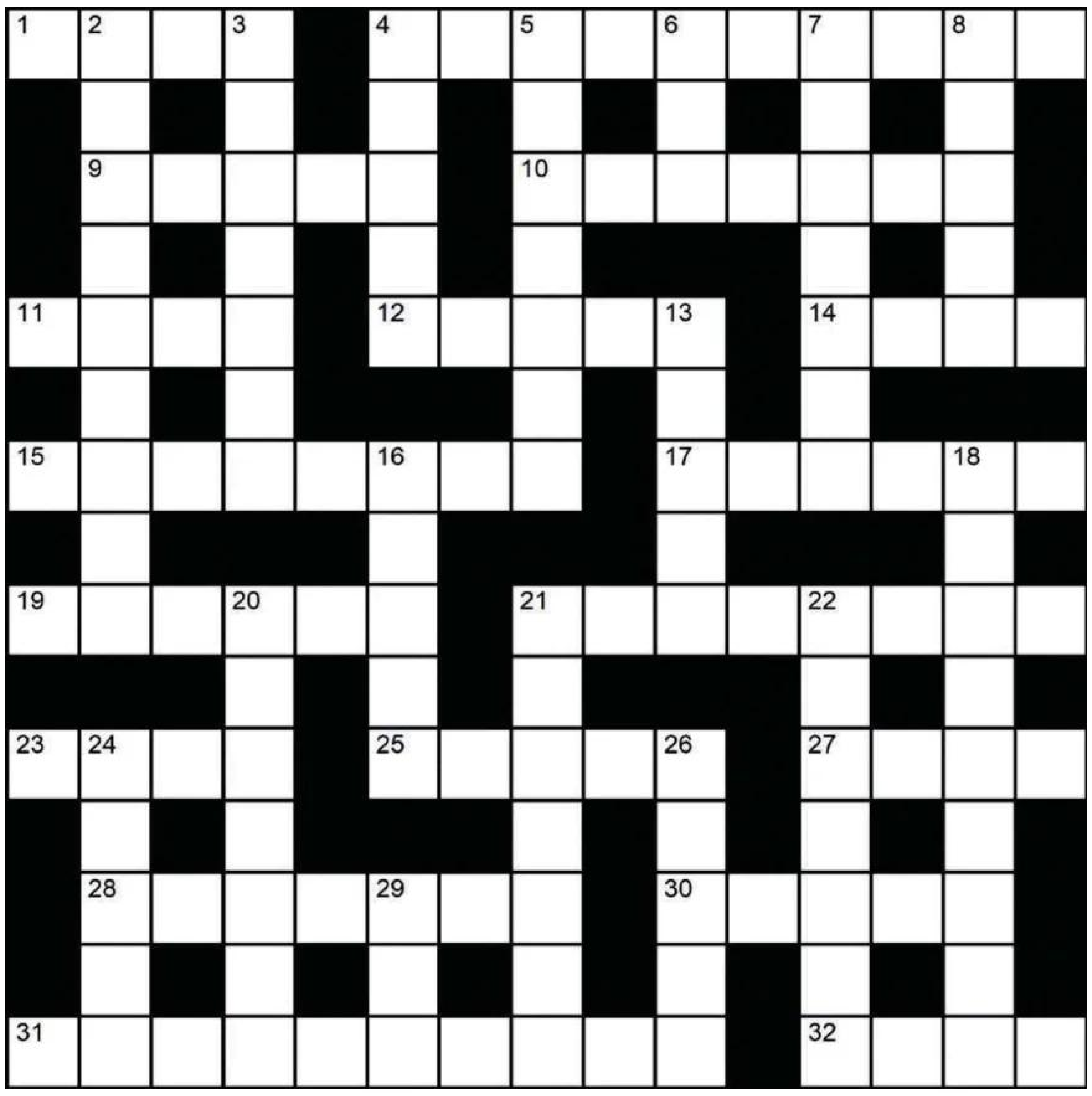
Crossword



ACROSS

1 Common name for an iris, but before lily it's a *Hesperantha* (4)
4 *Prunus spinosa* tree, bears sloe fruits (10)
9 Largest genus of conifer trees … from lupin usually (5)
10 Lays out quantity of money for this rockery plant (7)
11 Their crushed shells may deter slugs (4)
12 County location (abbrev) of Belvoir Castle and gardens (5)
14 Mineral found in eg sprouts – part of environment (4)
15 '___ flower' is a common name for the jewel-like gazania (8)
17 A single, late, bright-pink tulip … no wren disturbed (6)
19 Talk at length about how wild roses grow? (6)
21 Sap-sucking aphid – environmentally friendly insect! (8)
23 Eg a short, fruiting side shoot (4)
25 'False ___': hybrid of cowslip and primrose (5)
27 Fungal disease causing eg pustules on leaves – in citrus trees (4)
28 A *Verbascum phoeniceum* with saucer-shaped pink flowers – and historically important stone (7)
30 See 2 down
31 Genus of loosestrife (not purple loosestrife) – claim hay is affected (10)
32 Genus of Japanese maple (4)

DOWN

2/30 across Pink-flowering Chilean bellflower – a pergola area is transformed (9,5)
3 Spanish gorse genus – tangled in gates (7)
4 Describes cuttings taken at ground level (5)
5 A bi-generic hybrid of *Amaryllis* and *Nerine* – Armenia variation (7)
6 Winged tree fruit (3)
7 Coarse jute sacking material (7)
8 A *Diascia* series – 'Lover boy' (5)
13 An Alpine ___ garden uses small rock fragments (5)
16 *Arbutus* __, aka strawberry tree … partly pruned offshoots (5)
18 Poisonous aconite, aka 'monk's hood' (9)
20 A compact orange-flowering *Geum* (avens) – PM Johnson II? (7)
21 An aptly named giant *Eucomis pallidiflora* (pineapple lily) (7)
22 Smallest of the Greatorex-bred snowdrops … some gardener is saving (7)
24 Britain's first celebrity TV gardener, ___ Thrower (5)
26 A purple violet cultivar first appeared in Italy – and an Italian ham (5)
29 Drink made from leaves of *Camellia sinensis* (3)

- **Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the October issue**

SOLUTIONS TO AUGUST CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Lychnis **5** Cress **8** Stem **9** Stake **10/26** Root ball **11** Spindle **13** Protea **14** Venus **15** Didiscus **17** Blackout **20** Mulch **22** Crowns **24** Leopard **27** Osier **29** Lays **30** Apple **31** Arbutus.

DOWN 1 Lotus **2** Campion **3** NGS **4** Seaweed **5** Creep **6** Euryops **7** Smoke bush **12** Disco **14** Valeriana **16** Dumbo **18** Cowslip **19** Tellima **21** Leaflet **23** Spore **25** Dryas **28** Rib.

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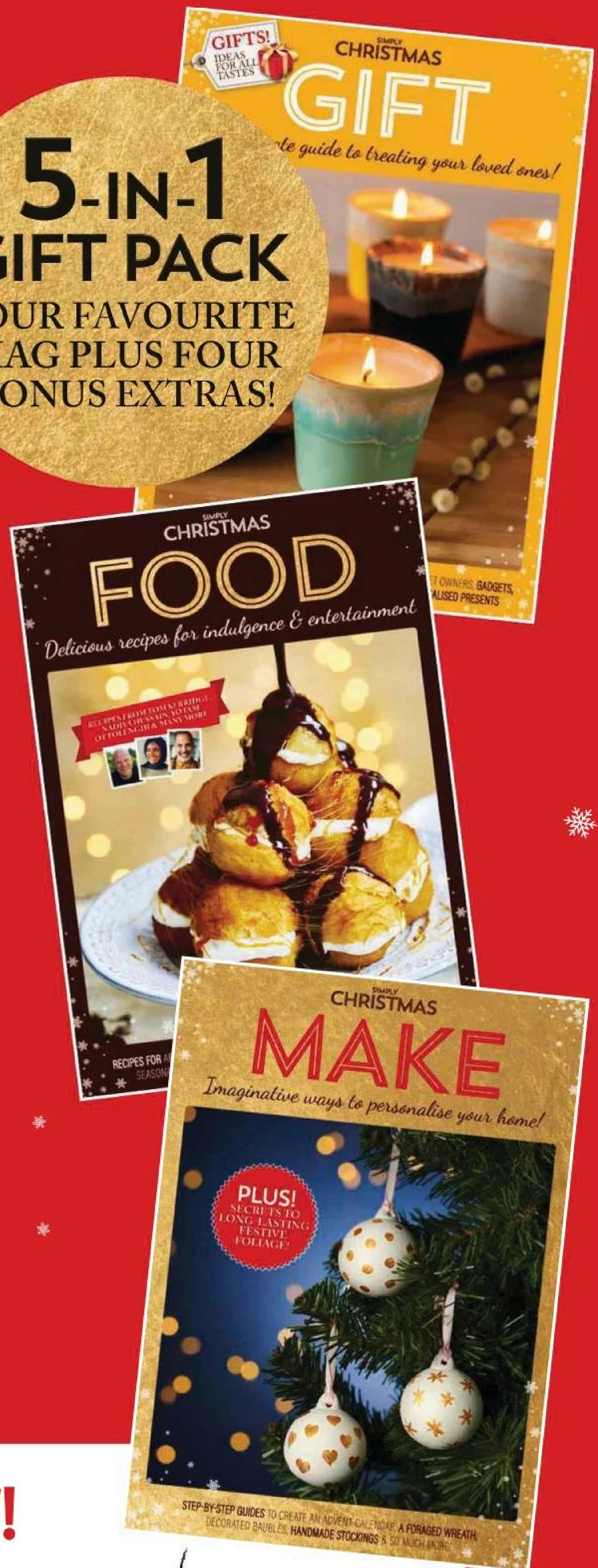
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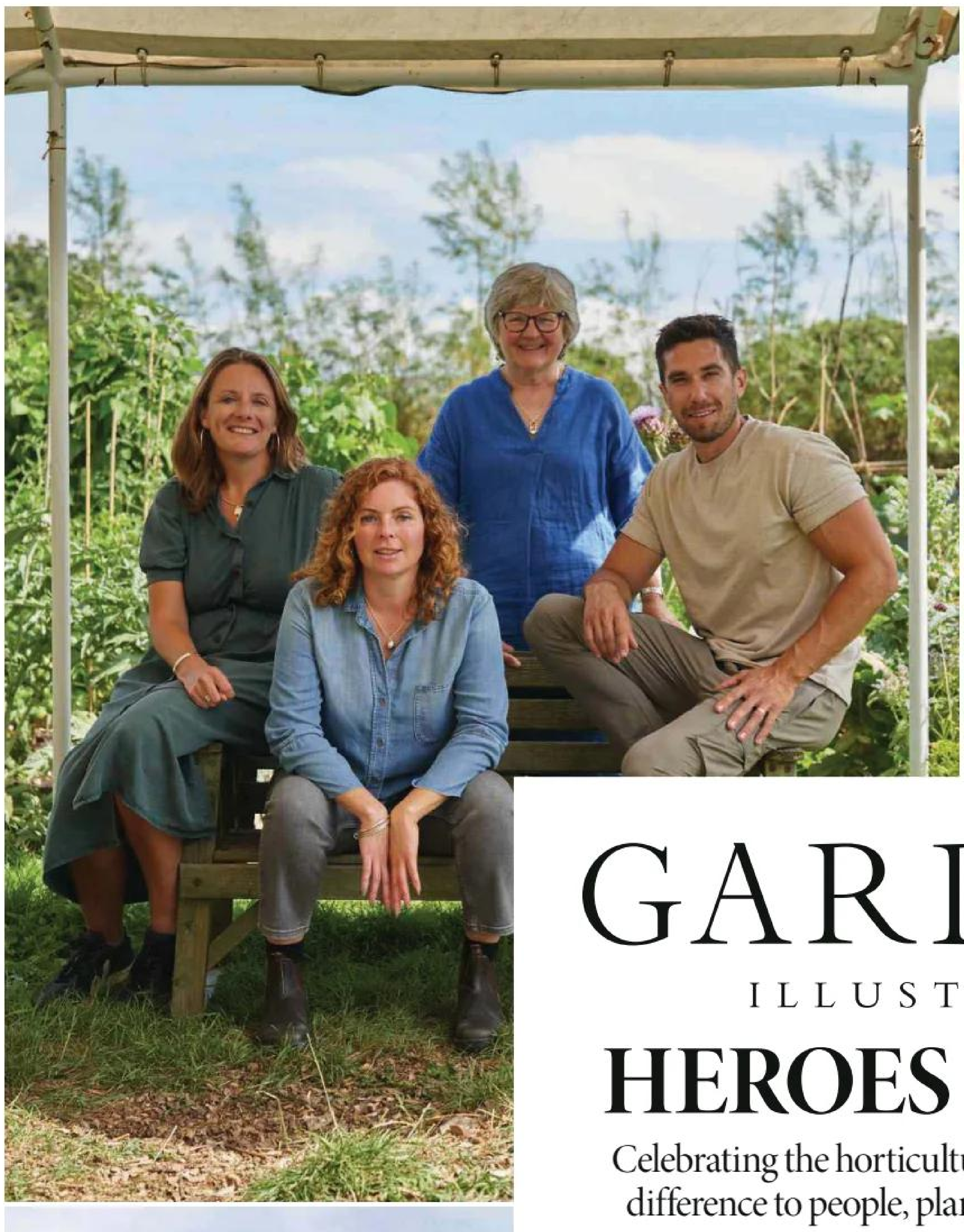

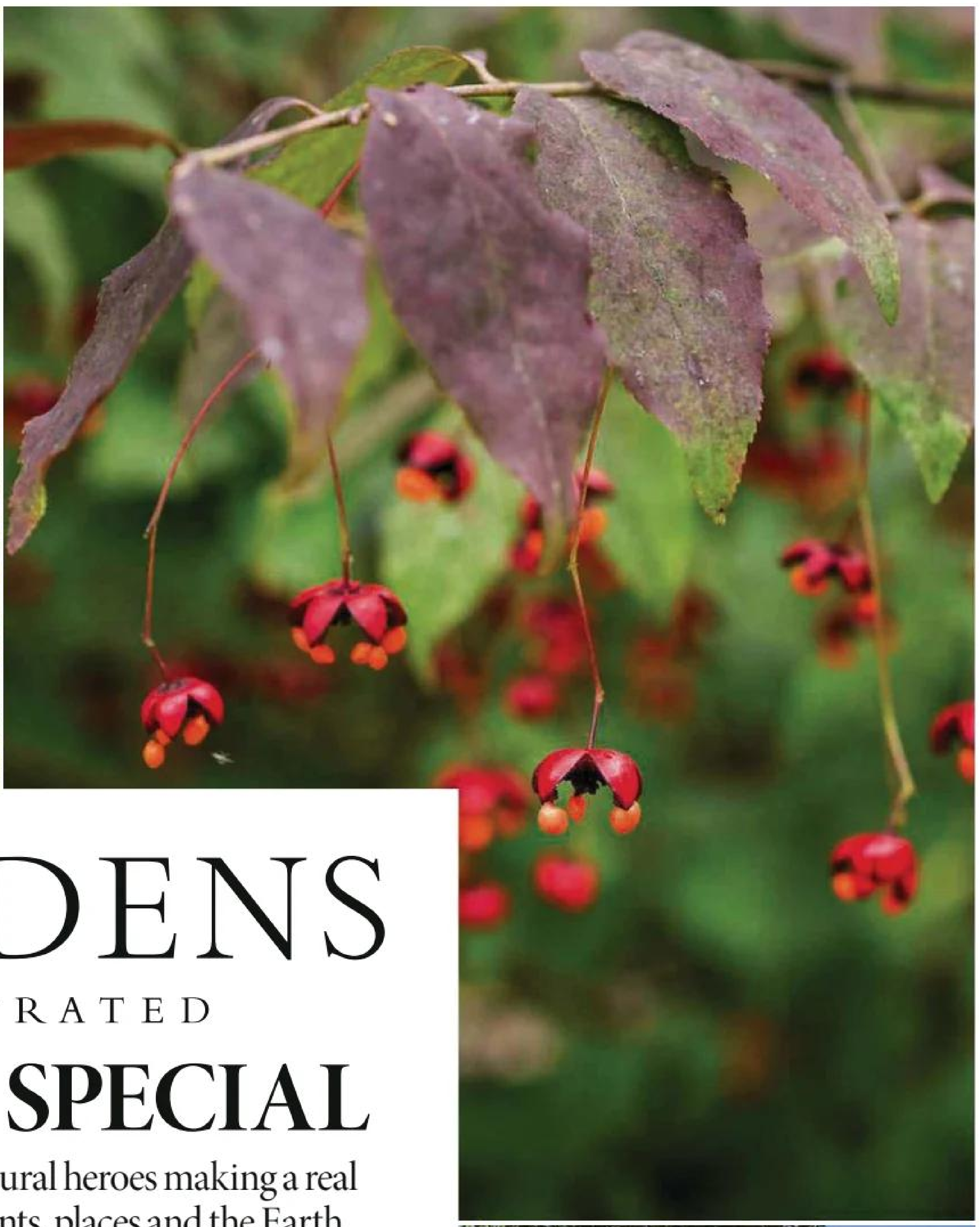

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THE FEMININE TOUCH?

Does your garden have masculine or feminine style, and does it even matter? Head gardener **Benjamin Pope** unpicks gardening's gender stereotypes

ILLUSTRATION ROSANNA MORRIS

Back in the spring of 2009, I had the pleasure of meeting Beverly McConnell, a formidable Antipodean plantswoman, internationally known for her garden Ayrlies in New Zealand. While showing her around the garden where I work, she remarked on the bountiful May display: "I hope you don't mind me saying, but this garden feels very feminine."

I smiled and replied that I didn't mind, but I was slightly taken aback. As we carried on the tour, I quizzed her gently on what she meant by 'feminine', but it was only as the weeks passed that I wondered about the first part of her comment. As a man in my late twenties, should I have been offended that my work had been described as feminine?

Throughout history, the stereotypical gender roles that have existed within industry and society have also been present in horticulture: men hunt and gather; women care and tend. For horticulture, this has meant men have traditionally been the gardeners and plant hunters, while women used the crops and worked with floristry.

The wise women who gathered and cultivated herbs for medicinal treatments were often branded as witches, while monks and physicians were given noble status under the auspices of religion and science. In the 19th century, gardening was celebrated as man's control over nature, described by Scottish botanist John Claudius Loudon in his 1822 book, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening*: 'plants be arranged in rows, tallest at the back, shortest at the front with much earth showing beneath'. A rather strict approach that might be described as hard, bold and masculine.

There were contradictions. While plant hunters such as Ernest Wilson and George Forrest explored the world in search of unseen species, aristocratic ladies, who on the surface simply painted and embroidered flowers, were studying and botanising flora, using pseudonyms to publish their findings. Emma Bennet, Countess of Tankerville, was one such lady, who amassed 648 botanical paintings while becoming a respected grower and botanist. Plant hunter Joseph Banks named an orchid (now called *Phaius tankervilleae*) after her.

Things have obviously progressed since then, but have opinions changed as much as we might hope? Respected trailblazers such as Gertrude Jekyll, Vita Sackville-West, Mien Ruys, Beth Chatto and Penelope Hobhouse (to name just a few) certainly broke from masculine traditions and paved the way for women to take their place alongside men in the annals of gardening. They, along with natural garden advocates such as William Robinson, softened the look of the Victorian garden, embracing a more relaxed, gentle approach and aesthetic. Perhaps this is what led to the idea of a 'feminine' style of garden.

In its 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report, the Royal Horticultural Society reported that: 65.4 per cent of its employees were women. On the surface this would suggest women are well represented in the horticultural industry, but this isn't taking their work areas into account. Look a little closer and it is easy to see that sectors such as arboriculture and landscaping are still heavily male dominated, while retail, catering and design are well attended by all genders.

I often hear men say: "I just do the lawn and vegetables, and leave the flowers to her"

In the gardens and plant nurseries I frequent, there are many wonderful and talented people, both men and women, who happily share in the passion of growing plants. But, talking to my contemporaries, it's clear this gender representation has some way to go. I've heard stories where women are consistently presumed to be volunteers or garden designers (surely not professional gardeners), and men are told they are gardening too soft.

The cogs of change appear to turn slowly, and with it, opinion on gender. When I give talks at gardening clubs, I often hear men say: "I just do the lawn and vegetables, and leave the flowers to her." While there is nothing wrong with finding a comfortable role, just sticking to traditional gender stereotypes can limit your opportunities for creativity and enjoyment.

As for the garden, well, the plants will grow in the same way whether they're described as masculine or feminine. I love soft, romantic, 'feminine' planting, but feel it really looks best when set alongside the hard 'masculine' lines of topiary, landscaping and layout. It is where soft meets hard and the delicate meets the bold that the natural artistic beauty of gardening comes alive. □

- Benjamin Pope is a head gardener, garden writer and lecturer.

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